

Sudan

Conflict history: Sudan

Head of State: General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, June 1989-

Africa's biggest country, Sudan is divided along lines of religion (70 per cent Muslim, 25 per cent animist, 5 per cent Christian), ethnicity (African, Arab origin), tribe and economic activity (nomadic and sedentary). Country has been in near constant war since independence in 1956, with most significant conflict between North and South 1956-1972 and 1983-2005.

Loose Ottoman-Egyptian administration collapsed 1880s after revolt led by self-appointed Islamic Mahdi. Anglo-Egyptian forces captured Khartoum 1889, establishing joint-administered condominium. British separated North and South until 1947, giving political power to northern elite before country gained independence January 1956. Fearing marginalisation by north, southern army officers mutinied 1955, forming Anya-Nya guerrilla movement. General Abboud seized power 1958, instituted policy of Islamisation.

Abboud forced out by 1964 popular uprising. Numerous Arab-dominated governments followed until 1969 coup by General Nimieri. Failed 1971 Communist coup left Nimieri politically isolated, pushing him to seek peace with Ethiopia, Uganda and southern rebels. Addis Ababa peace agreement with Anya-Nya March 1972 granted autonomy to South and integrated Anya-Nya into national army.

Systematic violations of agreement by government, combined with increasing Islamic shift in late 1970s and discovery of oil in south eventually led to resumption of war and deployment of northern troops to oil-rich town of Bentiu. Southern troops mutinied against government early 1983. Nimieri abrogated Addis Ababa agreement June, dissolving south's constitutional guarantees and declaring Arabic official language; Islamic Sharia law replaced Sudanese law September. Southern grievances crystallised around Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA) led by John Garang. Popular uprising overthrew Nimieri 1985 and Sadiq al-Mahdi's democratic government (Umma Party) elected 1986.

Moves towards SPLA-government peace halted when National Islamic Front (NIF) led bloodless coup June 1989, day before bill freezing Sharia law due to be passed. Led by General Omar al-Bashir, NIF unravelled steps towards peace, revoked constitution, banned opposition parties, moved to Islamise judicial system, stepped up north-south war, proclaimed jihad against non-Muslim south.

SPLA weakened 1991 by fall of Mengistu regime in Ethiopia and internal split leading to inter-ethnic fighting in south. Khartoum's harbouring of Osama bin Laden and other Islamic fundamentalist groups in early 1990s led to international isolation. 1998 US cruise missile attack followed terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam.

On-off negotiations between government and SPLA under Kenyan-led regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) made little progress 1994-2001. July 2002 Machakos Protocol granted self-determination referendum for south after six-year period, maintained Sharia law in north. January 2005 Naivasha Accords formally ended North-South war with signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), incorporated SPLA/M into Government of National Unity (GNU), created schedule for 2009 national elections. While implementation stilted – largely due to absence of political will within ruling National Congress Party (NCP) – new constitution ratified and new government sworn in by October 2006. July 2007 deadline for government troops to withdraw from south passed without international response. SPLM/A left GNU October 2007 in protest over delays, returning December 2007 and now holding cabinet and foreign minister positions. But tensions between Arab militia and SPLM in oil-rich Abyei region on North-South border, granted special administrative status by agreement, increased dramatically from March 2008 – army-SPLA fighting most serious breaches of CPA since signing. Some 100,000 displaced by June amid fears of return to full-scale civil war, leading to NCP-SPLM roadmap signed June to defuse conflict. Joint force deployed as first step in implementing roadmap. Agreed to submit Abyei border dispute to Hague-based Permanent Court for Arbitration.

CPA failed to address many demands of eastern groups that fought in North/South conflict. Separate peace (Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement) signed between the government and Eastern Front rebel groups in October 2006, but confidence in government's commitment remained low. Progress finally made in May 2007 when Bashir appointed 3 Eastern Front officials to new government positions, but slow return to war still possible.

New chapter in Sudan's civil wars opened in Darfur February 2003 when Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebels – predominantly from African Fur, Zaghawa, Massaleit tribes – attacked government garrison. After series of military victories, government-supported Arab Janjaweed militia began ethnically cleansing African tribes. Despite 2004 deployment of African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), attacks on civilians continued and Khartoum failed to rein in militias. Insecurity compounded by inter-rebel fighting and proxy war between Sudan and Chad, eventually destabilising Central African Republic (CAR). In March 2005, UNSC referred Darfur situation to International Criminal Court (ICC). ICC issued arrest warrants for government minister, Ahmed Harun, and Janjaweed commander, Ali Kushayb, April 2007; Khartoum has refused to hand over.

Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signed by government and one SLA/M faction (led by Minni Minawi, SLA/MM) May 2006, but undermined by absence of other parties. Attacks on civilians and aid workers increased dramatically from late 2006. Groups since splintered, confrontations complicated by Arab-Arab tension and broad 'land-grab' by all parties. SLA/MM as well as Janjaweed and government forces responsible for increasing attacks on civilians. IDP camps continue to militarise and generate own political demands, raising fears emerging organisations will take extreme positions. Retaliatory attacks accelerated and intensified from early 2008, when government launched major aerial and ground attacks in west and north Darfur. JEM's attempted assault on Khartoum on 10-11 May prompted government crackdown: 300 suspected JEM arrested in capital; ties severed with Chad. Political situation in Darfur was drastically complicated by the attack. Initially government closed door to dialogue by announcing that it would not negotiate with JEM or with SLM-Abdul Wahid. Khartoum finally accepted AU/UN hybrid force for Darfur (UNAMID) June 2007, in face of increasing international sanctions. UNAMID replaced AU January 2008, but resistance from Khartoum has slowed deployment.

ICC Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo July 2008 applied for arrest warrant for President Bashir for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. ICC judges now deciding whether to issue. Application increases pressure on regime to implement genuine measures to resolve Darfur crisis, but also poses major risks for Sudan's fragile peace. Ruling NCP, clearly shaken by development, trying to manage political and legal implications. In addition to broad domestic consultation process on Darfur, seeking international support, especially from African Union and Arab League states. Both organisations condemned Moreno-Ocampo's application.

updated September 2008

Source: International Crisis Group

http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=101

+++++

Transcript of conversation on PBS Newhour

Originally Aired: September 8, 2009

ICC Prosecutor Makes Case Against Sudan's President

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, discusses his view on war crimes charges levied against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir.

JEFFREY BROWN: In the meantime, even as the court tries to move forward with its case, the top U.N. military commander in Sudan declared, the Darfur region is no longer in a state of war.

Two weeks ago, General Martin Luther Agwai said: "What you have is security issues more now, banditry. But real war as such, I think we are over that."

Sudan holds national elections in April. If he stands, President Bashir will be seeking a third decade in power.

And joining us now from the United Nations in New York is Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Well, thank you for joining us.

I want to walk through some of the statements made by President Bashir in that interview. First, he essentially charges you with producing a political indictment, not one that belongs in a court of justice. By way of responding, help us understand how you built your case.

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: President Bashir has to come to court to make his defense.

I present my case in court. I present my evidence in front of the judges. And the judges issue an arrest warrant against President Bashir for five crimes against humanity and two war crimes. I appeal because they did not retain three genocide charges. So, I hope the appeal chamber will accept my position and, in addition, President Bashir will be charged with additional three charges of genocide.

The case is very simple. There was a rebellion in Darfur, and President Bashir decided that the tribes in the area -- and some of the rebels belonged to these tribes -- are -- are also to have been removed and eliminated.

So, the plan was not just attack the combatants. It was attack the civilians. And that was the concept. The minister of defense of President Bashir say to the U.N. Commission of Inquiry as soon as there's one rebel in the city, the city became a military target.

And that is what for two years President Bashir did. His army and militias that he recruits surround little villages, attack the people, the civilians, attack women and children, and kill, rape and torture, and force the displacement of four million people.

JEFFREY BROWN: And he continued...

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: And that's...

JEFFREY BROWN: Oh, excuse me.

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: No.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo
ICC Prosecutor

I have clear evidence showing this military operation was conducted for two years, but for thousands of soldiers. And he, al-Bashir personally gave the orders. He gave the orders: I don't like prisoners I just want scorched earth, he say.

'Scorched earth' policy

JEFFREY BROWN: No, well, I was -- he continued -- in that interview, he continued, as he has said before, that -- to say that the mistakes on the ground cannot be blamed on him or on the leadership. He cited what he saw as a double standard in how Sudan is being treated, as opposed to other places in the world.

How do you respond to those?

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: I only -- I would respond to him in court.

I have clear evidence showing this military operation was conducted for two years, but for thousands of soldiers. And he, al-Bashir personally gave the orders. He gave the orders: I don't like prisoners I just want scorched earth, he say.

And then, for two years, thousands of soldiers, thousands of militia Janjaweed incorporated with the army attack millions of people in the -- of civilians in the cities. And this was his order. And I have evidence of his orders.

And then the second phase is happening today, because that's what people is ignoring. Today, there are still an armed conflict with the rebels group, but most of the people of these village were displaced.

And 2.5 million people live in camps for displaced persons inside Darfur. And what's happened today, they are not killed using bullets. Rapes and hunger are the weapons of this new, more subtle way to commit the crimes against them.

So, people is ignoring because they are still there, and al-Bashir forces are blocking and hindering humanitarian assistance. This is also a way to commit a genocide, creating conditions to destroy these people. That is 6-C -- 6-B in the Rome Statute. It's a different form to commit genocide.

But because it is less -- is more subtle, we're ignoring it. And that's why, as a prosecutor, I cannot ignore it.

JEFFREY BROWN: Why -- why...

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: This...

JEFFREY BROWN: Excuse me.

I wanted to ask you why the indictment -- why do you think this has been so hard to enforce? As he said in that interview, he has been able to travel so far. He hasn't felt any restrictions on his movements. What's going on?

Those women raped each day, for them, time is crucial. They will die. So, that is the urgency.

'The victims cannot wait'

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: Arresting a head of state is a complex process. It took one-year-and-a-half to arrest President Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia and more than two years to arrest President Taylor.

Even in this country, in U.S., in a different case, after the indictment of Richard Nixon -- the process of Richard Nixon took -- took years. And -- but, at the end of the day, the destiny of President Bashir will be to face justice.

I have strong evidence I will have present in court. But the court can wait two years or 20 years. The issue is, the victims cannot wait. Those people in this place can't. Those women raped each day, for them, time is crucial. They will die. So, that is the urgency.

President al-Bashir should be arrested. Today, he's a fugitive president. He's desperate, trying to make this desperate effort to show he's traveling. But he's going nowhere. He's going to no country who is a Rome Statute member. So, the country where he's going has no duty to arrest him.

He tried to enter South Africa. South Africa informed him he would be arrested. Uganda. He cannot travel around the world. He can just travel only to a few countries.

So, at the end of the day, he will be arrested. Again, the priority here today is to stop his crimes. These people living in the camps are suffering a crime today.

We have a case against the rebel commanders. We also prosecute rebel groups. And one of the leaders of the rebel group who commit the worst attack against the peacekeepers appeared before the court.

Pursuing additional prosecutions

JEFFREY BROWN: Do you feel, though, that you're getting enough support from the United States and other countries?

I wonder if you feel like you're caught in some tension now between seeking justice for what's happened in Darfur and some attempts, some talk that's been out there about trying to find a political opening with Sudan. As you know, I'm sure, the U.S. is now reviewing its policy towards Sudan.

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: As I say, the arrest warrant will be implemented in two years or in 20 years. The issue, to stop the crimes.

When I present my case, people were saying, oh, this will stop any possible negotiation.

It's not true. When we started, there was no peace negotiation. In June 2008, negotiators resigned because they can do nothing. After I request the warrant, a new process started, and it's still ongoing.

So, there are two parallel tracks. Arresting President Bashir is one track. Making -- stopping the crimes and making a settlement for these people is a different track, very important.

JEFFREY BROWN: And, finally, what -- what -- what is the next step for you while you're -- while this is all going on? What are you able to do? Are you continuing to build your case?

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: We have this case against the president, Bashir, and Minister Haroun, and Ali Kushayb, a militia leader, joined the state.

But, also, we have a case against the rebel commanders. We also prosecute rebel groups. And one of the leaders of the rebel group who commit the worst attack against the peacekeepers appeared before the court. And the confirmation hearing is scheduled for October. So, we're working very -- we're very busy working on the confirmation hearing for this -- for Mr. Abu Garda, the leader of one of the rebel groups. So, we're working on Darfur, and we will keep working on Darfur.

JEFFREY BROWN: All right, Luis Moreno-Ocampo of the International Criminal Court, thank you very much.

LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO: Thank you.

+++++

Background Report/ PBS Online Newshour
The Darfur Crisis

Origins of the Crisis

An estimated 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced in the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of western Sudan, where militias have targeted civilians in attacks the United Nations warns could rival the 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which more than 800,000 people died.

The killings of mostly black African Muslims have been blamed on an Arab militia known as the Janjaweed. Like their victims, the Janjaweed are Muslim, but are accused of ethnic atrocities, including burning and destroying villages in parts of Darfur and of slaughtering men, women and children.

Human rights groups and refugees also accuse the militia of mass rape, characterizing the situation as ethnic cleansing and genocide.

International leaders and aid agencies have accused the Sudanese government, led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, of arming and supporting the Janjaweed.

"The government of Sudan is responsible for 'ethnic cleansing' and crimes against humanity in Darfur, one of the world's poorest and most inaccessible regions," a 2004 Human Rights Watch report said. "The Sudanese government and the Arab 'Janjaweed' militias it arms and supports have committed numerous attacks on the civilian populations of the African Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups."

Sudan's government denies the charges and has promised to disarm its militias, though reports from aid groups in the region say widespread attacks continue.

Ethnic conflict

The conflict in Darfur dates back to early 2003 when black Africans from Darfur rebelled against the country's Arab Muslim leadership demanding improved infrastructure in the region, proceeds from oil wealth and a power-sharing government. The Sudanese government retaliated by sending in government forces to quell the rebellion. The government also reportedly organized and supplied the Janjaweed militia to combat the rebels.

The main rebel groups involved in the conflict are the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement, or SLA/M, and the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM. Both groups have demanded equal representation in the government and an end to the economic disparity between black Africans and Arabs in Sudan.

The violence in the mostly arid desert region has driven millions of Darfur villagers from their homes. Most are in disease riddled refugee camps in Darfur while some have fled to crowded camps in neighboring Chad.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has characterized the crisis in Darfur as the "worst humanitarian crisis in the world today."

Few aid agencies have been able to penetrate the region because of the violence. Those that have gained access report alarming scenes of starvation, disease and mass killings.

International involvement

In July 2007, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved a resolution to send a joint United Nations/African Union peacekeeping force, known as UNAMID, to the troubled Darfur region. Although the force is authorized at 26,000 members, less than 10,000 had been deployed as of June 2008.

According to Jan Eliasson, former U.N. special envoy to Darfur, a combination of factors was contributing to the slow deployment, including reluctance from the international community to send equipment and from the Sudanese government to accept peacekeepers from certain countries, along with logistical problems such as a lack of roads, lodging and water.

Joint AU-U.N. Special Representative for Darfur and UNAMID chief Rodolphe Adada wrote in a June 25, 2008, op-ed column in The Wall Street Journal that the mission faces a daunting task of trying to "keep a peace that doesn't exist" in light of splintered rebel groups and stalled negotiations.

Nonetheless, Adada wrote that the peacekeeping force -- though small -- is still managing to conduct daily patrols across Darfur, which is the size of Texas. "Our peacekeepers intervene on a daily basis across the length and breadth of Darfur to calm tensions arising from cattle losses, water distribution and land ownership -- issues at the heart of the conflict," he said.

Meanwhile, a growing number of world leaders are pressing the Sudanese government to improve access to the region, allow peacekeepers and disarm the Janjaweed militia. President Bush has called the situation a "genocide" and said the "world has a responsibility to help put an end to it."

Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide signed by members of the U.N. General Assembly in 1948, member countries, including the United States, are required to intervene when genocide occurs.

-- By Kristina Nwazota, Online NewsHour

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/africa/darfur/origins.html

+++++

Background Report/ PBS Online Newshour

Rebel Groups in Darfur

Although unified in their desire for an independent Darfur, the rebel groups fighting the Sudanese government have been plagued by deep internal divisions and power struggles.

The region's many rebel groups agreed on Jan. 20, 2006 to join forces under the Alliance of Revolutionary Forces of Western Sudan, however, several months later, the rebels still were negotiating with the African Union and the Sudanese government through different leaders and factions.

There are two main rebel groups within the alliance. The larger one, the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement, represents non-Muslim tribal Africans and is led by Minni Arcua Minnawi and Abdel Wahed Mohamed el-Nur.

The smaller one, the Justice and Equality Movement, represents non-Arab Muslims, headed by Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Muhammad.

The two divisions remain united in their opposition to Sudan, their motives developed for different reasons.

Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement

The SLA/M grew out of an armed self-defense militia formed by western Sudanese indigenous tribes.

Arable land in western Sudan has long been a source of conflict between Arab nomads, who want to use the land for grazing, and African tribes, who want to use it for farming.

During a famine in 1987, an Arab alliance formed in opposition to the farming communities of the African tribes, and in response, the tribes created militias for self-defense.

Three men now claim the presidency of SLA/M. Minni Arcua Minnawi, of the Zargawa tribe, has long been recognized as the troop commander of SLA/M, and as of 2005 was elected as its leader.

However, Abdel Wahed Mohamed el-Nur, the longtime political leader of SLA/M, has been the chief negotiator for SLA/M at peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria, and also claims SLA/M's presidency.

But on March 6, 2006, 19 of SLA/M's leaders denounced Nur in a public statement: "Abdel Wahed Mohamed el-Nur is determined to go it alone to consolidate his dictatorship and marginalize all the institutions of the movements in his drive to carry out his narrow-minded personal agenda."

This split further complicated negotiations in Abuja and a temporary leader of the SLM/A was appointed, Nur's deputy, Khamis Abdallah Abakr.

Justice and Equality Movement

In a 1989 coup, National Islamic Front leader Hassan al-Turabi helped overthrow President Sadeq al-Mahdi, clearing the way for Omar Hassan al-Bashir to take the leadership post.

Al-Turabi then incorporated non-Arab African Muslims into the political system of Sudan.

After al-Turabi reportedly tried to reduce his power, al-Bashir dissolved the government and purged it of the non-Arab African Muslims who went on to form JEM.

Long dominated by Islam, the government of Sudan is accused by JEM of being discriminatory and oppressive to non-Arabs. Statements from JEM's Web site accuse the government of offenses, including taking land from African tribes, systematic rapes, destruction of basic infrastructure such as water and electrical systems, and bombing of civilians.

The Web site also describes a complaint of both rebel groups -- attacks on camps of internally displaced persons. It is in defending these camps, made up mostly of non-Arab African Muslims and Africans, that the SLA/M and the JEM often encounter Janjaweed militia, who sometimes plunder the camps taking livestock, water and other resources, and sometimes women.

In January 2006, the two groups issued a joint statement:

"The two movements have agreed to join and coordinate all political, military and social forces, their international relations and to double their combat capacity in a collective body under the name, the Alliance of Revolutionary Forces of West Sudan."

While this presumably means that the two movements are operating under joint command, the agreement was signed by Ibrahim Khalil Mohammad and Minni Arcua Minnawi, which means that the faction of SLA/M still loyal to Abdul Wahed Mohammed el-Nur may not be party to it, even though they have been taking part in peace negotiations.

- Compiled by A.C. Valdez for the Online NewsHour
- http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/africa/darfur/rebel-groups.html

+++++

Background Report / PBS Online Newshour
Sudan's Janjaweed Militia

On Feb. 27, 2003, bandits mounted on horses stormed into the town of Tawilla in Sudan's north Darfur region and executed a "well-organized attack" on its residents. The antagonists killed at least 67 people, abducted 16 schoolgirls and raped 93 others, six in front of their families. According to accounts, including those reported by the United Nations, the attackers branded the hands of those they raped to remind them of the incident and ostracize them from society.

The United Nations blames this attack -- and numerous others like it -- on the Janjaweed: a violent militia with reported ties to the Sudanese government in the capital of Khartoum.

The assault is but one example of the conflict that has raged since 2003 between the Arab-Islamic government and rebel groups fighting for independence -- a conflict that has killed roughly 180,000 people, although some analysts estimate the death toll to be more than 300,000.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and the U.S. Congress have called the crisis genocide.

The Janjaweed have primarily targeted the Fur, Tunjur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups, presumed to be sympathetic to rebels opposing the government. The attacks against the non-Arab Muslims by the Janjaweed have been "grossly disproportionate to the military threat of the rebellion," wrote Alex de Waal in a 2004 essay that appeared in the London Review of Books.

De Waal, program director at the nonprofit Social Science Research Council, called the attacks "the deliberate destruction of a community."

The name Janjaweed is a combination of Arabic words meaning outlaws, gun and horse -- appropriate associations, as observers often tell stories of Janjaweed militiamen riding horses and brandishing heavy weaponry like AK-47s and G-3 rifles.

Experts say the Janjaweed originated from a Chadian warlord militia sponsored by Libya that retreated into Darfur after the Chadians defeated Muammar Gaddafi in 1987, de Waal said.

The militia teamed up with nomadic, camel-herding Darfurian Arab tribes, impoverished by drought through the early 1980s and in need of land on which to settle. These loose roving bands of armed fighters worked as a "freelance tribal militia" for 10 years before assuming the role of counterinsurgent "used by the government of Sudan" to combat rebels, said de Waal.

A religious agenda does not impel the Janjaweed, de Waal said. Its motivation is land, but blatant racism and a political ideology known as "Arab supremacism" also fuel the Janjaweed's agenda.

The Janjaweed are both "cleaning" the land of non-Arabs and viciously combating the rebellion while receiving impunity from the government in Khartoum, de Waal said.

The Janjaweed has been a key force in the government's campaign in Darfur "that has resulted in the murder, rape and forced displacement of thousands of civilians," said Human Rights Watch, a nonprofit organization particularly concerned about Darfur.

The Sudanese government denies any relationship with the Janjaweed and says that it is seeking to disarm both the Janjaweed and the Darfur rebels.

"The government armed the people who volunteered to fight against the rebels, the armed groups. And, these people were not Janjaweed," Sudanese Ambassador to the United States Khidir Haroun Ahmed told the Online NewsHour in September 2005. "[T]he government has no hesitation at all in disarming the Janjaweed. The problem is the other nomad tribes. These people and the lack of law enforcement in the region, they will not disarm themselves unless you disarm the rebels groups."

Most international observers dispute the government assertions. Groups like Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group -- another nonprofit focused on Darfur -- accuse the Janjaweed militias of carrying out most of the atrocities in Darfur. Armed with anecdotal reports from eye witnesses, they have charged the Sudanese government with financing and arming the militia. ICG went as far to say that Khartoum has established "divisions" within the militia: the Strike Force, Border Guard and Hamina (traditional tribal leaders).

In September 2004, Musa Hilal -- widely regarded as the leader of Janjaweed and placed on the U.S. State Department's list of suspected genocidal criminals -- told HRW that the Sudanese military commands the Janjaweed.

"All of the people in the field [the Janjaweed] are led by top army commanders," said Hilal. "The highest rank is major, and officers, and some sergeants, and some captains, and so on. These people get their orders from the western command center, and from Khartoum."

A February 2004 Sudanese government memo obtained by HRW appears to back up Hilal's relationship with the government.

The memo, sent from local authorities in North Darfur, urges security units in the area to "allow the activities of the mujahedeen [a paramilitary unit organized by the government] and the volunteers under command of the Musa Hilal to proceed in the areas of [north Darfur] and to secure their vital needs." The directive then asks that volunteers "overlook minor offenses by the mujahedeen against civilians who are suspected members of the rebellion."

Khartoum nonetheless denies any links between it and the Janjaweed -- and has said it is working to simultaneously disarm everyone, including the Janjaweed and the rebels, in the region.

"There are crimes committed by the Janjaweed definitely, no doubt about that. Maybe other nomad militias also subscribe to some kind of havoc in the region, no doubt about that. But, there is a great deal of violations committed by these two rebels group. But because they got sympathy here, because many people also politicize the situation for different reasons, because many people are looking for regime change in Khartoum using this Darfur issue, you don't hear much about that," Ambassador Ahmed said.

The president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, has called for increasing the police force in an effort to end the violence, but HRW has said that as early as 2004 Janjaweed members are being "absorbed" into the police forces in Darfur.

- By Oliver Read, Online
- http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/africa/darfur/militia.html

+++++

BBC NEWS

No return for Sudan's forgotten slaves

By Joseph Winter
BBC News, southern Sudan

Akech Arol Deng has not seen his wife and son since they were seized by Arab militias from their home in south Sudan 19 years ago.

His son, Deng, was just three years old at the time but Mr Arol is sure they are still alive, being used as slaves in the north.

"I miss them so much. I really hope that one day they come back," Mr Arol told the BBC News website mournfully in his home of Malualbai, just a few hours' on horseback from the Bahr el-Arab river which divides Muslim northern Sudan from the Christian and Animist south.

Some 8,000 people are believed to be living in slavery in Sudan, 200 years after Britain banned the Atlantic slave trade and 153 years after it also tried to abolish slavery in Sudan.

But rows about money mean no-one is doing anything to free them.

In the same year that Mr Arol's family was kidnapped, Arek Anyiel Deng, aged about 10, was seized from her home, not far from Malualbai.

Arab militias rode in to her village on horseback, firing their guns. When the adults fled, the children and cattle were rounded up and made to walk north for five days before they were divided between members of the raiding party.

Forced conversions

Ms Anyiel returned home under a government scheme last year.

"My abductor told me that I was his slave and I had to do all the work he told me to - fetching water and firewood, looking after animals and farming," she said.

"When I was 12, he said he wanted to sleep with me. I could not refuse because I was a slave, I had to do everything he wanted, or he could have killed me."

Such raids were a common feature of Sudan's 21-year north-south war, which ended in 2005.

The northern government is widely believed to have armed the Arab militias in order to terrorise the southern population and distract rebel forces from attacking government targets.

According to a study by the Kenya-based Rift Valley Institute, some 11,000 young boys and girls were seized and taken across the internal border - many to the states of South Darfur and West Kordofan.

The boys generally looked after cattle, while the girls mostly did domestic chores before being "married", often as young as 12.

Most were forcibly converted to Islam, given Muslim names and told not to speak their mother tongue.

War of words

Sudan's government has always rejected claims that people are living in slavery but admits that thousands were abducted during the war. It says this is an ancient tradition of hostage-taking by rival ethnic groups.

One senior government official strenuously denied there was any slavery in Sudan but bizarrely acknowledged: "It was the same as when people were taken from West Africa to America."

The United Nations defines slavery as: "The status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised."

Ms Anyiel and several others we spoke to certainly seemed to have been living in conditions of slavery - having been abducted, subjected to forced labour and often beaten.

To be able to work with the return programme the government set up in 1999 under intense international pressure, donors agreed to use the euphemism "abductee".

About 3,000 were taken back home before the programme ran out of money in 2005.

Donors pulled out, saying some were not genuine slaves, some had been returned against their will and had been left to fend for themselves in the desolate, under-developed south.

The government then funded the return for a while but strangely, the end of the war seems to have taken the urgency out of the project.

The governments in both north and the autonomous south seem more interested in spending their new oil wealth.

Officials from both administrations say they are still working out their new policy on the "abductee file".

Disillusioned

Ahmed Mufti from the government's Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC) says the Arab tribal leaders are now more than happy to release the "abductees" but his group does not have the \$3m he estimates it would need to arrange transport and pay officials to organise the operation.

Faced with this lack of progress, James Aguer, the man at the forefront of the campaign to free Sudan's slaves, is becoming increasingly disillusioned after spending some 20 years risking his life for the cause.

"With peace, I thought they would be freed by now," he says bitterly.

He says he has the names and location of 8,000 people, who could easily be freed from the Arab cattle camps, as soon as the political will is there.

He says the true number of those being forced to work against their will without pay in Sudan is more than 200,000, although most donors believe that is an exaggeration.

Sitting on the dusty ground outside the abandoned mud hut where she and her five children now live, Ms Anyiel is delighted to have finally gained her freedom and to be able to make decisions about her own life.

But freedom is not necessarily easy - she now has to support the children on her own, with no assistance from donors or the government.

Her only income comes from collecting firewood in the bush to sell in the local market.

"It's like I was still in the camp, it's the same situation as in the north," she complains.

Tribal markings

Ghada Kachachi, from United Nations' children's agency Unicef, uses Ms Anyiel's case to explain why funding was stopped for CEAWC's return programme.

She says those who are freed must be helped when they get back home - both economically and socially, as they move from an Arabic society to the Dinka community some left 20 years ago.

But campaigners say the first priority must be to free them from slavery and then sort out the details of their return.

Ms Kachachi also points out that it can be difficult to trace the parents of children abducted in a war zone up to 20 years ago.

Some have forgotten their real names and where they come from, although they can sometimes be identified by the marks cut into their faces as children - a part of Dinka traditions.

Save the Children UK is still helping foster parents look after some children several years after they returned "home".

While officials debate the best way to organise the return, Mr Arol and many others are just desperate to see their loved ones again.

He has gone to meet four different convoys of returned abductees in the hope of being reunited with his family, only to be disappointed each time.

"I always ask God, why other children come back but not mine. What have I done to deserve this?" he asks.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/ft/-/2/hi/africa/6455365.stm>

Published: 2007/03/16 14:45:37 GMT

© BBC MMIX

+++++

Guys: Slavery is not a problem just unique to Africa. The following item should make you wonder whether there is sex slavery here in the U.S. too.

BBC NEWS

Sex slavery widespread in England

Young women tricked into coming to England, often by boyfriends, are being sold off in auctions at airport coffee shops as soon as they arrive.

They are among the thousands of women brought into the UK to be sex slaves, usually with no idea of their fate.

The trade was one of the findings of a BBC News website investigation into slavery in 21st Century England.

As the UK marks 200 years since the Parliamentary Act to abolish the slave trade, slavery goes on in another form.

The slave trade, outlawed by legislation introduced in March 1807, saw people from Africa transported en masse to the Americas with the involvement of people from the UK and other European countries.

Women rescued

Modern day victims of slavery are often young women from eastern Europe, thinking they are coming to England to work as cleaners or au pairs, only to be forced into prostitution.

“ I was kept locked in the house for two weeks - he raped and slapped me every day ”

The Home Office estimated in 2003 that 4,000 women were trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. It is thought the figure may have grown since.

Police forces from Cornwall to Northumbria have found themselves having to rescue women and prosecute the traffickers who brought them to England to work as sex slaves.

And as well as foreign citizens coming to the UK, charity workers in Manchester told the BBC they believed British women working in massage parlours had been sold abroad, because they owed the owners money.

Child protection organisations and human rights groups also believe there are thousands of child sex slaves in the UK.

The UK Human Trafficking Centre was opened last year to co-ordinate the law-enforcement approach to the problem.

A spokesman told the BBC women were sometimes sold off in auctions in airport coffee shops and restaurants as they arrived in the country.

And he said there were also many cases of English women, from backgrounds of poverty, being sold from town to town to work as prostitutes.

But it is now believed that as many as 85% of women working in brothels in the UK have come from overseas - in the mid-1990s, an estimated 85% were UK citizens.

Operation Pentameter, a Home Office initiative aimed at rescuing sex workers held against their will carried out between January and July 2006, saw 84 trafficked women rescued, including 12 aged 14 to 17.

Some 230 arrests were made and more than £250,000 in cash was seized - but officers were only able to visit about 10% of the estimated number of sex establishments in the country.

'Horrific brutality'

The Poppy Project, a London-based scheme which provides accommodation and support for the women, has had 581 victims referred to it since its launch in 2003.

Its own research in 2004 found evidence of "off street" prostitution in every one of London's 33 boroughs, again with the overwhelming majority of workers in brothels, saunas and massage parlours being non-British nationals.

The Helen Bamber Foundation, set up to help victims of torture and other human rights violations, said women being forced into sex slavery in England were experiencing "horrific brutality", with physical violence and the psychological trauma of being forced into sex.

“ The man who owned me beat me and then sold me on - I was too much trouble ”

Jiera, 19-year-old Lithuanian trafficking victim

Many women rescued from the sex trade have said they were sold, or strongly encouraged into heading for the UK, by boyfriends or family members.

Many think they are coming to work in jobs such as cleaning or ice cream selling.

Jiera, a 19-year-old from Lithuania who was helped by the Poppy Project, thought she was coming to London on holiday with friends, only to find they were people traffickers who sold her into prostitution.

She said: "When I was with clients I tried to pretend I was doing something else, but I couldn't. It made me so angry that I was often violent towards the clients.

'Devastating effect'

"The man who owned me beat me and then sold me on. I was too much trouble.

"Even if my friends don't judge me for what happened, they will always know what I did. They will never forget, and neither can I."

Many police forces - and not only in major metropolitan areas - have set up specific teams to deal with the problem.

Sussex Police appointed a detective to lead investigations into sexual exploitation in November.

They said they had responded to information concerning potentially exploited women working in brothels in the county almost every week since.

The government prioritised human trafficking during the UK's presidency of the EU in 2005.

In the next few weeks it is to lay out a strategy to counter the problem.

A Home Office spokesman said: "Human trafficking is a particularly horrible crime, based on deceit, exploitation and very often brutality.

"It is a crime that has a devastating effect on the lives of individuals, and contributes to the overall harm caused to the country by organised crime.

"It is important for all countries, including the UK, to do whatever is necessary to develop effective enforcement, prevention and victim support systems, both internationally and domestically."

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/england/6459369.stm

Published: 2007/03/19 06:13:52 GMT

© BBC MMIX

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/6459369.stm

+++++