

SUDAN

Sudan Government's solution: Janjawid unleashed in Darfur

Brutal attacks on civilians by Janjawid nomad militia are taking place in many parts of Darfur. The attacks, though targeted at civilians, serve the Sudan government's strategic ends.

A military offensive in August and September 2006 by government armed forces failed to crush the rebel groups not signed up to the Darfur Peace Agreement of May 2006. Now, during a new offensive in November, the government has unleashed the Janjawid, alone or accompanying the armed forces, to attack civilian populations near or around the bases of the non-signatory groups.

Two years after the first UN Security Council resolution on Darfur in July 2004, and in spite of the Darfur Peace Agreement, grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law continue unabated in Darfur. They include mass forced displacement, unlawful killings, and looting of civilian property. Attacks directed at civilians violate the most basic rule of international humanitarian law. They constitute war crimes and can be crimes against humanity.

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) forces have investigated some but not all of these attacks. Their reports have not yet been formally submitted or made public. The African Union has taken no action against the perpetrators.

Civilians targeted

While the government armed forces continue offensives against rebel group bases, the Janjawid are sent into villages to attack civilians. In mid-November armed forces attacks were concentrated on Bir Maza, a base of the "Group of 19", a Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) faction that refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement. Bir Maza is now deserted.

Many civilians have reportedly died in the attacks and the bombings which have accompanied them. At least 3,000 people have fled and are hiding in the bush, mountains and caves, mostly without any access to humanitarian aid.

Several hundred Janjawid accompany such strikes, in trucks or on horses or camels. They attack civilian villages along the route, loot cattle and possessions, burn houses, and sometimes kill, rape or abduct those they catch. Many are incorporated within paramilitary units such as the Border Intelligence and are freshly armed with Sudanese-made weapons.

As in the mass forced displacements of 2003-4, the Janjawid invariably attack unarmed civilians believed to be supporters of armed groups. They do not usually engage the armed opposition groups, which have now seized large amounts of munitions from government forces. The inhabitants of the villages are almost without exception from ethnic groups identified as "African", their ethnicity linking them to the armed groups.

The method, targeting, and degree of violence employed in the attacks suggest that their main purpose is terror – to terrorize the people and forcibly displace them from the land. Above and beyond the brutal killing and injuring of civilians, there has been deliberate targeted killing of young boys in the Jebel Moon attacks in October (see below). The wanton burning of grain stores, harvest crops and homes, the looting of herds of cattle and sheep, appear to leave inhabitants no option but to flee without hope of return.

Such attacks are predominantly launched by the Janjawid. However, government soldiers and fighters from factions such as the SLA Minni Minawi faction which signed the Darfur Peace Agreement also sometimes participate. Victims describe

army groups and individual officers among the attackers, and assaults are generally mounted from well known Janjawid or government bases not far from the target villages.

In some places, once aware of attacks on villages, armed opposition groups are reported to have engaged the Janjawid. Thus, although civilians are the main targets, some of the people killed may be members of armed opposition groups or civilians caught in the crossfire.

The presence of armed opposition group camps near to civilians in itself endangers the civilian population. However, international law is clear. Civilians must not be attacked. Even if there are family or tangential links between individual civilians and members of rebel groups, and even if the groups derive some material support, such as foodstuffs, from the local population, international humanitarian law protects all those who do not take a direct part in hostilities. Attacks on civilians are war crimes.

The deliberate attacks on villages are part of a government policy to evacuate communities that might support the armed opposition and to make it difficult for the armed groups to sustain themselves. Using the Janjawid to fulfil such objectives is less costly militarily and materially.

West Darfur

The recent Janjawid attacks are an escalation of a previous pattern of continuous strikes. The attack in the Jebel Moon area was one of the most horrific, but typical in many respects.

□ Jebel Moon is an area of mountains where both the SLA and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel groups have bases. It was the villages not the armed group bases that were the targets. Eight villages and the camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) at Hijilija were attacked. The Janjawid, many with new uniforms and weapons, attacked the first village, Ghibeish, at dawn on 29 October 2006.

Most of the more than 50 civilians killed that day were in Ghibeish, taken by surprise as they slept. In all the villages, Janjawid on horseback were reported to

have fired at people indiscriminately, while those on camels rounded up the livestock.

Of the inhabitants killed, about 26 were children, 21 of them under the age of 10. Young boys were targeted. According to testimonies collected by the UN, a group of three children tried to run away but were caught. One of them, a five-year-old boy, fell down and was shot dead. Another boy who begged to be spared was told: "If I let you go you will grow up. I will not let you go". He was then killed. One woman's four-year-old son was torn from her arms and shot dead in front of her.

When they had killed or driven away the inhabitants of each village, the Janjawid plundered goods and burned harvest crops in the fields, destroying villages' entire food stocks, and reportedly damaging the water supply. Villagers fled to the town of Silea, formerly an aid centre but now mostly deserted by agencies because of insecurity, and on across the border into Chad.

□ Two weeks later, on 11 and 12 November 2006, government armed forces and Janjawid on horseback attacked Sirba village and IDP camp. At least 11 civilians, including one woman and a schoolboy, were killed and eight injured. Some were taken to al-Jeneina hospital. In the attack, many of the houses were burned, as well as the fields and the grain stores. Herds and possessions were looted. In the Sirba IDP camp dozens of shelters were completely destroyed by fire. Other villages, which had been deserted, in the area round Silea were burnt.

The government stated that there had been an ambush on an armed forces patrol, killing two soldiers, and the attackers fled to Sirba. Other sources said that the attack was unprovoked and the soldiers were killed afterwards.

North Darfur

□ The Janjawid made a number of attacks from their bases in Sayah and Kuma. On 8 November 2006 they attacked Abu Jira, 25km north of Mellit, killing five people. On Friday 10 November the same Janjawid force attacked Madu, about 80km north of Mellit, and rained heavy weapons fire on the market, reportedly from 125mm guns, before looting it. In the neighbouring

village of Hilla Ali Azraq, four people were killed, reportedly children.

□ *Accompanying the government armed forces offensive against Bir Maza, in North Darfur the Janjawid attacked many other villages on the way and in the area. Villages attacked include Tangurara. Yaqubtor, Kereikil, and Kwakwa. They killed an unknown number of civilians, abducted people and looted cattle.*

On 15 November the Janjawid abducted six men, cattle owners and hired herders, from a cattle camp at Qadir village. Men abducted by the Janjawid are used as servants to look after looted cattle in their bases. They are routinely ill-treated or tortured, and later killed or released.

On 20 November Janjawid supported by Sudan armed forces attacked al-Jineiq, some 15km north of Bir Maza, killing up to 20 civilians and looting a large number of cattle.

Act now!

*Civilians in Darfur need effective protection **NOW**. They, the African Union, and the Darfur armed opposition groups, and nearly all Sudanese political parties are all calling for a transfer of peacekeeping responsibilities to the UN, a call that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir continues to reject.*

Join Amnesty International's call to the Sudanese government, the Janjawid militia and armed opposition groups to:

▶ **cease immediately all attacks on civilians, and respect international humanitarian and human rights law at all times;**

▶ **provide adequate protection to all displaced persons within Sudan, without discrimination and in accordance with international**

standards;

▶ **commit itself to supporting an effective peacekeeping force with a strong mandate to protect civilians. The UN is best equipped for this task;**

▶ **cooperate with the investigation being carried out by the International Criminal Court in Darfur, to ensure that those suspected of involvement in war crimes and crimes against humanity can be brought to justice.**

Please send your appeals to:

Field Marshal Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
President's Palace, PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: + 249 183 776603 / 777583
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send appeals to your government's Minister of Foreign Affairs to put pressure on the government of Sudan to:

▶ **cease immediately all attacks on civilians;**

▶ **ensure that a peacekeeping force with a robust protection mandate has full freedom to operate in Darfur. The UN is best equipped to carry out a long-term engagement with the mandate, resources, logistical support and personnel to protect the population and eventually support and protect displaced and refugees to return voluntarily and in safety.**

More information on the human rights situation in Darfur can be obtained at
<http://www.amnesty.org/sudan>

Amnesty International, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom
AI Index: AFR 54/078/2006, 24 November 2006, PUBLIC