



# FORGET ME NOT

EXPERIENCES OF CIVILIANS IN WAR-TORN  
SOUTH KORDOFAN STATE

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



**Since June 2011 when the conflict broke out in Sudan's South Kordofan state, there has been an extensive campaign of aerial bombardment and ground shelling by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Sudanese People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) controlled areas.**

Attacks by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have targeted schools, hospitals, and homes. Between January and April 2015, the SAF dropped more than 374 bombs on 60 locations across areas of South Kordofan that are under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N).

Amnesty International researchers found no evidence of military targets in areas where bombs were dropped.

The SPLA-N is an armed opposition group operating in Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The SPLA-N has captured and maintained control of a substantial part of South Kordofan, with ground fighting

continuing between Sudanese and SPLA-N forces at the edge of that area. The SPLA-N does not have aerial capabilities giving the SAF relatively unhindered control of the skies above the entire state.

Civilians have taken some measures to increase their protection by constructing makeshift and semi-permanent foxholes throughout the region. In informal internally displaced persons (IDP) sites in the Nuba Mountains, civilians are hiding in caves and crevices.

The targeting of civilians and civilian objects, the restrictions to humanitarian aid and the use of weapons such as cluster bombs by SAF is a war crime.

Despite efforts to find safety in foxholes and in the mountains, the fear of an attack, heightened by the unmistakable droning sound of Antonov planes, dominates daily life.

*"Bombs have fallen on hospitals, schools and foxholes. Little babies and the very old have been killed. In South Kordofan I don't think that there is anywhere that is safe, and I don't think there is anyone who is safe."*

**-Ahmed (name changed to protect identity), national relief worker, Kauda, South Kordofan**



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*People seeking shelter from bombs in foxholes*

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## SPREADING FEAR

Civilian property, including homes, fields, food stores, hospitals, health clinics, schools and market areas, have been destroyed or significantly damaged by airstrikes by the SAF. Indiscriminate military attacks have spread pervasive fear and terror among the civilian population.

On 18 April 2015, four bombs were fired from two fighter jets in the village of Eral in Heiban County. Khalil Yusuf Ergajig,

a 13-year-old boy, was killed in the attack. The boy had run to a nearby foxhole, with four other children, but he did not make it in time and was killed by shrapnel, only a few meters away.

*The attack took place at noon-time. First I heard the MiGs (fighter jets) and then I saw them. There were two of them coming from the north. My children were eating lunch and I quickly rounded them up. The bombs were dropped and I fell*

*to the ground. I was some distance from where the bomb landed and there were two other buildings in front of me. But still some shrapnel reached me and was embedded in my skull. I still have headaches and I cannot carry any weight on my head. My five-year-old girl was also slightly injured on her forearm. She is still very afraid*

-Najwa Omar, Heiban, 7 May



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*People running for dear life after a bomb fell nearby, Kauda.*



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*Woman running to find shelter, Kauda.*

## THEY BOMB SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS

### Schools

On 28 May 2015, a bomb hit St Peter and Paul Primary School in Gidel, which hosted 500 students at that time.

*"It was a massive explosion. Everyone started running in different directions. I yelled for students to hide in the foxholes. We have always been afraid of bombs falling here, especially after the hospital was attacked in early May. We have around 200 foxholes on the school grounds. But many students were so scared.*

*They ran away from the school. I saw many climbing over the fence to get away. What if a bomb had fallen where they were running? They bomb hospitals and schools. They want to destroy us. But we only closed the school for two weeks after this attack. Students came back to class on June 9 and now we even have more students".*

**-Peter, a teacher at the school who witnessed the attack.**

### Hospitals

**'When the Antonov came back again, I knew it was no accident'**

**- A hospital staff, Mother of Mercy Hospital, Gidel, South Kordofan, 6 May 2015**

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, 26 hospitals, clinics and health units have been bombed in SPLM-N controlled areas, some of which were clearly identified with flags and crosses on their roofs.

Only two, out of four, hospitals in SPLA/N controlled areas are still functioning. The constant bombing of hospitals and clinics has contributed to a collapse of the health care system in SPLA/N controlled areas and humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have had to scale back their operations. In one such case, on 13 January 2014, seven rockets and bombs fired by the SAF landed in the MSF hospital

compound in Tunjur, Dalami County, damaging the clinic.

The blockade on access to SPLM/N controlled areas by the Sudanese government has also worsened the already dire humanitarian situation.

In the face of a lack of vaccines, the region experienced an outbreak of measles between May 2014 and January 2015. In one of only two hospitals still operating in areas controlled by the SPLA-N, 1,400 children were treated for measles and approximately 30 died from this preventable disease. Meanwhile in the rest of Sudan, the Ministry of Health and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have now launched a massive campaign to immunize 7.9 million children aged six months to 15 years against measles in 2015. But children in SPLA-N controlled areas of South Kordofan have no access to those vaccines.



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*'I could not believe that a hospital could be bombed. The last time a bomb hit inside the compound was on 13 January, 2014 around 1pm and the bombings lasted till 4pm. I was here hiding in this foxhole, when two MiG (fighter jets) and an Antonov came three times from the north east direction and bombed the hospital. The MiGs (fighter jets) fired around 114 rockets in one day. Seven rockets landed inside our compound. The Antonov dropped three bombs outside the compound. A hospital is not supposed to be attacked. It is always supposed to be safe. If they are attacking hospitals they will attack anything.'*

**-A health worker at Tunjur clinic, Dalami County, 8 May 2015**

*One of the three unexploded rockets that landed a few meters from Kauda Rural Hospital on 28 May, 2014.*



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*Amar Al Jaali, 11-year-old, injured on 15 January 2015 by an unexploded ordnance on his right hand. On the left is a close-up of the injured hand.*

## ATTACKS ON CHILDREN

Children have frequently been killed and injured in attacks in South Kordofan.

They are constantly in danger because when they are out playing they are more likely to be where the bombs land. They do not always understand when they are supposed to hide. They are also in danger because they are attracted to shiny objects which means they are easily hurt and killed if they play with unexploded bombs after an attack. All of this is worse when bombs start landing in and around schools.

In February 2015 the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel received survivors of a deadly Antonov attack in Umm Dorain County. Eight children and one adult hid in a foxhole when they heard the plane. However when a bomb hit a nearby shelter it was set on fire and fell into the foxhole where they were hiding. According to witnesses, three of the

children were killed immediately. The other five children and the adult were transferred to the hospital. Three of the survivors died at the hospital and the other three were eventually released.

*I have treated 1855 wounded children and adults at this hospital since the conflict began and I have seen people in incredible pain. The suffering of these children, with terrible injuries from the fire was among the worst I have ever seen. We could do very little for their pain.*

**- Doctor at Mother of Mercy Hospital, Gidel.**

On 16 October 2014 a bomb hit a house in the village of Heiban in Heiban County in which seven children between five and 12 were hiding. Six of the children were killed, immediately or following the attack, and one was injured. The children's mother was farming in a

nearby field at the time.

*As soon as I heard the first bomb I stopped my vehicle and got out. Then there was a second bomb, only about 25 metres away, and I went to ground. The first bomb had directly hit the house where the children were hiding. A number of us ran to the house. It was a terrible sight, with parts of bodies scattered around. Two girls, aged five and seven, were still alive. We put them in my vehicle and I drove as fast as I could to reach the hospital in Gidel. The five-year-old girl died the next day. That bomb destroyed that family.*

**- An eyewitness, speaking to Amnesty International delegates.**

On 15 January 2015, 11 year-old Amar Al Jaali was working in the fields with his mother and siblings. He found an unexploded ordnance and began to play with it. "It looked so shiny and nice. I hit it with a stone

and it exploded,” he told Amnesty International researchers. The explosion injured his right hand, nearly severing his thumb and index finger. He was first taken to a local health centre in Mendi and then transferred to the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, where he stayed for 21 days.

*‘I was right beside him when this happened. This is not good. The airplanes hit children and old people. We do not want these things*

*happening to us. These bombs they drop, hurt the children and the people in the village. They do not discriminate between the old or the young.’*

- Amar Al Jaali’s mother

Abdel Aziz Hamad, a 15 year old boy, was injured by an unexploded ordinance thought to be from a rocket propelled grenade launcher, while tending cattle in Mendi along with two friends on 29 April 2015. The

explosion killed his two friends

*We found some shiny items and we started to play with them. We hit one of them with a rock and it exploded. The explosion killed my two friends and I was injured in both of my legs and my penis.*

- Abdel Aziz Hamad, Mother of Mercy Hospital, Gidel, South Kordofan, 6 May, 2015.

## NO ESCAPE FROM HUNGER

The conflict in South Kordofan has led to the internal displacement of about 1.4 million people and 100,000 people have sought refuge in refugee camps in neighbouring South Sudan. Since the start of the conflict, civilians have been living in desperate conditions, fleeing from constant bombardment, sheltering in foxholes and caves, with limited access to food, water, and medical care. The ongoing fighting has prevented people from farming their fields and often times food supplies have dwindled or run out.



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*A woman struggles to get water to irrigate her farm. Most of the people are too scared to go out to cultivate the fields for fear of bombs falling on them.*

*“We are used to growing our own food. But we haven’t planted anything for the past two years. We couldn’t because we had to run away. We are too afraid to work in our fields... Conditions are so difficult. We have major problems with food, schools, clothing and plastic sheeting in particular. And we spend so much time getting in and out of foxholes that there is no time to cultivate any crops...”*

-Salha, an internally displaced person in Kimli IDP site.

*“Villagers and IDPs come to our office every day looking for food. They have been unable to grow their own crops and they have nothing to feed their children. But we have nothing to give them because nothing arrives from outside.”*

-Awad Saeed Kodi, Executive Director of Heiban County.



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## URGENT INTERNATIONAL ACTION: MAKE IT HAPPEN

Civilians in South Kordofan continue to experience widespread breaches of international humanitarian law and systematic violations of numerous international human rights principles including the rights to life, healthcare, education, food, safe water and adequate housing.

As the conflict enters its fifth year, the intensive aerial bombardment campaign by the Sudanese government continues. Efforts by the international community to pressure the Government of Sudan to stop aerial bombardments, allow unfettered humanitarian access and to investigate allegations of grave human rights violations and abuses in Southern Kordofan and have been slow and inadequate. Attempts to facilitate dialogue between the Sudanese government and the SPLA-N to help find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the crisis have so far been ineffective.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) only gave specific attention to the crisis in South Kordofan in 2012 and issued Resolution 2046 (2012). This Resolution, expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation created by the “continued fighting in the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, in

Sudan,” and entrusted the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) with responsibility for reaching a negotiated settlement between the Sudanese government and the SPLA-N, and “strongly urged” both Sudan and the SPLA-N to permit humanitarian access. The resolution also established an initial requirement for the UNSC to be briefed at two week intervals as to the status of compliance with the resolution. Those briefings now only occur once every three months.

On the other hand African Union (AU) efforts to resolve the conflict through the AUHIP have stalled since late 2014 and show no signs of reviving.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also recommended an independent, thorough, and objective inquiry into alleged atrocities in 2011 in South Kordofan with a view to holding perpetrators to account.

Amnesty International made similar recommendations following a mission to Southern Kordofan in August 2011. These recommendations are yet to be acted upon by the UNSC or the AU.

Amnesty International stands with the

people of South Kordofan and is urgently calling on the parties to the conflict, the Sudanese government, and other governments working through both the AU and the UN to take immediate steps to end violations of international humanitarian law and other serious violations of human rights, including targeted and indiscriminate attacks, open up access to humanitarian relief, and uphold the human rights of the people of South Kordofan

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join the campaign and show solidarity with the people of South Kordofan. Pressure the Government of Sudan, the AU and the UNSC.

The campaign will exert greater pressure on the Government of Sudan, the UNSC and the AU to take greater action to address serious concerns with respect to civilian protection, humanitarian access, human rights monitoring, and justice and accountability.

The recommended actions below are aimed at ensuring measures are taken to ensure the protection of human rights in South Kordofan

## TAKE ACTION NOW

### Call on the Government of Sudan to:

- immediately end all attacks directed at civilians and civilian objects, as well as all indiscriminate aerial bombardment and other indiscriminate attacks in South Kordofan;
- allow unrestricted, independent humanitarian access to all areas of South Kordofan to provide food, health services, support to the education system and other humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by the conflict;
- ensure that all children, including those in regions most severely affected by the conflict, have access to life-saving vaccinations and essential medicines;
- launch prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law to bring those suspected of criminal responsibility before civilian courts in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty; and

### Call on your government through your Minister for Foreign Affairs to:

- urge the UNSC and the AU (where relevant) to take action on a number of fronts, including exerting greater pressure on the Government of Sudan to stop committing war crimes and other international humanitarian law and human rights violations, and pressing for humanitarian access to all conflict-affected areas.
- increase pressure on the Government of Sudan and the SPLA-N to renew dialogue which prioritizes strengthened respect for international human rights and humanitarian law principles including the protection of civilians in armed conflict;
- support the expansion of the current UN arms embargo on Darfur to cover the whole of Sudan, to help prevent further violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the country.
- call on the UN Secretary-General to establish an independent international Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, with

a mandate to make recommendations about how to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

- call or support the establishment of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Sudan with a mandate to investigate and report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the UN General Assembly on the human rights situation in Sudan including conflict in South Kordofan.

### Please send appeals to:

#### Address 1:

#### Your Government through your minister for Foreign Affairs.

Contact an Amnesty International Section in your country if you need relevant contacts of your government officials

#### Address 2: President of the Republic of Sudan

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**Amnesty International** is a global movement of more than 7 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

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