Civilians forced to live in caves by Government of Sudan military offensives

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Summary

On 13 January, the Obama administration announced a change to decades-old US foreign policy, stating that it is “easing” sanctions on Sudan.

This is despite the fact that the Government of Sudan continues to kill civilians with impunity. In the Nuba Mountains, aerial bombardments force women and children to live in snake-infested caves, while President Al Bashir – currently being sought by the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity – pursues a racist policy of ethnic cleansing. Human Rights Watch have called Barack Obama’s decision “inexplicable”, while US-based campaigners called the new US policy “premature”.

Given the scale and intensity of the suffering, we were eager to visit the people living in such dire and dangerous situations – to hear and to tell their stories, to take desperately needed medical and food supplies and to try to generate more international support. While this short report is unable to reveal the full extent of their suffering and their needs, we hope it will provide at least some opportunity for appropriate response.

Meanwhile, South Sudan requires comprehensive assistance to recover from the war inflicted by the former north, in which two million people perished, four million were displaced and virtually all the infrastructure was destroyed. We were impressed by the resilience of those whom we met and their initiatives to meet as many of the needs of their people as possible.

Objectives

- To obtain current information on the continuing military offensives by the Government of Sudan (GOS) against its own civilians in Southern Kordofan’s Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile (the ‘Two Areas’).

- To accompany Mende Nazar, who had been enslaved by the GOS in the previous war, as she returned home to her people and to obtain evidence of the continuing suffering inflicted by the GOS through their policy of mass enslavement in South Sudan and the Two Areas.

- To obtain information on the continuing effects caused by the GOS policy of enslavement.

- In Bahr-El-Ghazal, to achieve a better understanding of the challenges confronting the people of South Sudan and their endeavours to rebuild their land.
Main Findings

1. The genocidal policies of the Government of Sudan in the Two Areas, with continuing military offensives despite the publicly announced ‘ceasefire’ in June 2016

Bombardment of civilians by Antonov aircraft, together with repeated shelling with long-range missiles, continues in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. It has caused civilian deaths, injuries and displacement to locations with life-threatening conditions. The displacement prevents people from tending their crops, especially as the Antonovs target anyone working in the fields.

As recently as 9 January, SAF and militias in Blue Nile attacked areas of Arum in Bau County, killing civilians and forcing them to flee from their homes.

The policies of direct military attacks leading to forced displacement – coupled with the exacerbation of access to sources of food – inevitably aggravate the serious problems of food shortage already caused by the combination of war and a poor rainy season. It is estimated that there will be dangerously high levels of food insecurity and a real risk of famine in the coming months.

These ruthless policies, already well documented and still being perpetrated by GOS, reflect President Al Bashir’s avowed commitment to turn the Republic of Sudan into an ‘Arabic, Islamic nation’ by attempted genocide of African indigenous peoples in the Two Areas and of Christians, traditional believers and Muslims who do not accept his Islamist ideology.

These policies are consistent with the similar genocide being perpetuated by GOS in Darfur. It is thought by people in the Two Areas that GOS is currently focusing its military might predominantly in attempts to conquer Darfur. It will then bring its full military capacity to overcome Blue Nile, leaving the Nuba Mountains vulnerable to attack from three sides with all the military forces combined to achieve its final objective of subjugation of these three regions of Sudan.

Case Study of a civilian forced to flee from his home and live as an IDP in Kurchi

At the beginning of in 2011, we were in our own village Dalldoko, 22km East of Kadugli. It belongs to rural East County. We moved from there because SAF Forces attacked the village and captured some villagers. If you are lucky, you will be moved to Kadugli where they will keep you in the prison. If you are not lucky, they will kill you.

Some were killed in the villages. When we ran, we left the elders who couldn’t run and 15 were burnt by the SAF soldiers in their homes. We ran to Gardot Salgam. We stayed there for one year...
Then there was another ground offensive: they burnt all our homes and they shot about six men. We then moved to Um Serdiba in Um Durein County. We stayed there for two years and we then had to move again because of another ground attack and our community split. Some went to Dunou and the majority came to Kurchi - and this is how we live now.

So we have moved four times as there is no security. We don't know where we will move next time from shelling and other attacks. 130 shells have been fired to here from Kadugli. They also use Shehab long range missiles against us here and Antonovs and MiGs come suddenly.

Sometimes Antonovs come and circle around for hours sometimes without bombing and then they are followed by MiGs which come very fast and they drop bombs. At other times, Antonovs come and bomb directly. The seriously injured are transferred to Kauda; the less seriously injured are treated more locally. Most people came here in May 2016 from Um Serdiba and Nuggra because of ground attacks and shelling. Five days ago, we saw an Antonov in spite of ceasefire and this causes terror for the people.

People live in fear. The last MiG came in July. The Antonovs can come daily. The last time they dropped bombs was September. Shelling is continuous, including on 20 December 2016. They usually start shelling at night, especially 9pm-midnight. Antonovs and MiGs come by day. The majority of casualties were in Um Serdiba where about 12 were killed by shelling and eight civilians badly injured, losing limbs. Many more soldiers were injured.

Here we are near Kadugli - about 35 km away. At night we can see the lights. GOS declared a ceasefire for one month in the beginning of January. But there have been hundreds of ceasefires which have been broken. I believe they are preparing for war. They just declare to deceive the international community.

We appeal to the international community to understand this is a lie and a deception to enable Khartoum to prepare for war. The international community must take the initiative for the people who have suffered too long. What is happening in Nuba Mountains is genocide but no one takes this seriously. The money given to Khartoum for humanitarian aid will be used to kill us.

How do the international community expect Khartoum to use it for food when they kill us. If we use any food given by Khartoum it might kill us because we can't trust them. We expect them to poison food for us as they plan to kill us. They have done this in the past, bringing food which caused skin lesions, vomiting and diarrhoea. This happened here in Um Duren and Buram and Tobo County.
A personal story

They tried to capture me in Kadugli in June 2011 because I supported Abdul Aziz. They came to my house and they took my wife and interrogated her demanding to know where I am. She told them that I ran with my kids. And she didn’t know where I was. They beat her to try to force her to tell them where I was. When they had gone, I told her to take the seven kids to her mother in Khartoum because she couldn’t run through the bush with the children. I told her to go to Khartoum and send the children to school. We have been apart ever since. I can’t go to Khartoum so I send them money to help with education: three in primary, two in secondary and two in university.

I left my wife and children in 2011 and I have not seen them since then. When we were separated, my smallest daughter was 18 months. Now she is seven and when I last spoke she said 'Daddy, please come to Khartoum. I want to see you, not the money.'

My message to Her Majesty’s Government is this: the British people know the indigenous people of Sudan and that we are Nuba. You must understand that GOS wants to Islamise and Arabise the indigenous people. We will not allow this. We will fight. You should not give money to Khartoum because they want to destroy the indigenous people in Darfur and the Two Areas and bring people from other Arab countries and to steal this land from us. We want to live in peace in our lands - Muslims, Christians and traditional believers want to live in peace with each other. They want to destroy this and force their religion and to eliminate the indigenous African people. I was in prison for 6/12s for telling the truth and they forbade me to tell the truth.

In Blue Nile, we were able meet Benjamin Kuku, a New Sudan Council of Churches humanitarian aid worker, who gave an update on the situation in Blue Nile State

Sudan declared a unilateral ceasefire in the Two Areas in July 2016. This was to mislead the world regarding what it is doing on the ground: shelling, ground offensives and aerial bombardment have continued, although ground offensives slowdown in rainy season because the Army can't move.

We also had a very poor harvest and we expect hunger and famine from March until May when it is totally dry and we run out of food until the next harvest time. We have to adopt coping mechanisms, eating roots and scavenging for other things to eat until May when rains start and we can use green foods...
...No other aid organisations are bringing food so HART [Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust] has been the only source of help.

The main targets for ground offensives and missiles in Blue Nile are Baw, Ingessana and Wadaka counties. The majority of people stay as they say they would prefer to die in their own country than flee abroad as refugees.

Fulani Mercenaries are fighting in Ingessana hills from Damazin and Kirmuk. They drive local people off their lands and occupy them. The majority of people in Blue Nile are Muslims but GOS empowers militias to drive them away and to occupy the land. Ingessana has fertile land but when attacked the people fled to the hills. When the people want to return to their homes they cannot do so, as they are occupied by the Fulani with their cattle. Missiles from Kadugli hit beyond Kauda; those from Kirmuk hit Wadaka. Before Christmas, there were many shelling attacks.

Thanks to the help HART has given in the past, we were able to get education started appropriately and worthwhile. There are now 31 Primary Schools using the South Sudan English curriculum. We only have untrained teachers, and two students from Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains, supported by HART, who are training as teachers at Cavendish University. Only HART has provided any medical supplies - free of charge. There are now only five Health Centres (grass but well kept) and we have had no supplies of medicine for two years. Health care workers are not qualified but have basic knowledge and are trained by qualified nurses and midwives in Doro Camp. Then they teach others. We would like very much to send three students (one nurse, one midwife and one nutritionist) for health care training. The need is now.

My message to the world: the Khartoum regime has succeeded in misleading the world regarding the reality on the ground. People in the international community are very naive. The GOS has its own interests and is looting and killing with no intention to help the people. They want the conflict to persist as it is a religious war so they obtain funds from Islamic countries.

Other countries don’t understand and so GOS continues to slaughter its own people with impunity. This war is ideological and so help comes from Qatar and Saudi Arabia. If it stopped being a religious war, such support would cease.

When we see people like you, it gives us the encouragement to carry on. If we hadn’t seen you we might have been tempted to give up and leave. But when we see you, and you come to us, to meet and talk to the people and see the situation, this gives us hope and encouragement to continue.
2. Humanitarian needs of the internally displaced people (IDPs) forced to flee from their homes by GOS military offensives

During the visit, we climbed for two hours up a mountain to Dunou where several hundred families have fled to take shelter in caves, despite the presence of deadly snakes. Those who now live in the caves have to undertake the climb regularly to carry food and water.

There is no health care: I interviewed a girl who had been bitten by a cobra and she had survived with traditional medicines. I also entered one of the caves where the family was crammed into a small space, unable to stand up and a woman was lying on a makeshift bed seriously ill with malaria – and no treatment available.

Excerpts from selected interviews with civilians living in the snake-infested caves in Dunou (some available but not published)

...On 29 April 2016, around 2pm, Antonov aircraft bombed my village and it hit my hut. It was an incendiary bomb which set fire to the straw hut and burned my six children alive. My remaining son survived the bombing but was also severely burned and retains the scars all along one side and all along his leg. He was terrified and is still traumatised....
...I have had malaria for a long time, but I am getting worse. I am living near this cave shelter in case of bombing from Antonov aircraft or shelling, because I have no energy to move. I have no water, no food. The meagre shelter is unlikely to protect me but I have nowhere to go and I am only waiting for God to give me peace....

...When the Antonov aircraft bombed my village on 9 June 2016, I was at school. We ran to the caves to take shelter. We have no water here so we have to walk down into the valley along exposed steep paths ...In the caves there are a lot of deadly snakes, one of my brothers was bitten by one and died...

...On 9 June 2016, Antonov aircraft bombed my village and hit my hut killing my four children and my pregnant wife. The ferocity of the explosion was so severe that it pulverised all the contents of the hut including all the utensils and all our livestock. I have only two children left who survived the bombing with severe injuries and mental trauma. I pray for peace to come to the Nuba Mountains...

**Paramount chief Abdullah Rais Korey Anglo from Omsdiba, 10km away**

On 28 March 2016, Arabs invaded and we were forced to flee to the mountains as they act as barrier. We knew seven days in advance that the Arabs were coming, so we ran with our children.

The Arabs shelled our area with Antonovs and shelled from Kadugli. 15 people were killed and 30 injured.

We cut trees to dress wounds and carried them on beds. We couldn’t bury the dead but when SPLA came, they buried them. The SPLA recaptured the area but we can’t go home because it is too close to GOS forces who shell us with different types of bombardment: jet aircraft, helicopters and Antonovs.

This has been happening since 2011 and continues to now. They are still bombing us. Yesterday we were getting bombardment from Mushtark 3km away with long range shells on this mountain. The shelling has not stopped - every week and sometimes every day.

Since we fled from our homes, we now have a hard life. Where we were had fertile land. Here, there is no food and no proper school or medication. And we need peace.
Meeting with General Jogot Mukuar Commander of Division 1 and the Chief of Staff of the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North

People don't see in media what is happening in the Two Areas. The present situation in the Nuba Mountains is worse than in any previous years.

GOS tried to disarm us and then to target civilians forcing them to become IDPs. 72,000 GOS troops attacked the Nuba Mountains. Seven convoys came at the same time, and attacked villages.

We managed to push them out but they kill everyone who can’t escape and animals. They destroyed towns and Lezarek in Heiban County and in Delami County. In the big offensive last year they took 30 towns and we captured some back.

Shells from Kadugli destroy complete homes and families. They also attacked in Eastern areas where we can’t reach them and the people are eating grass. They force people to hide in rocks, with no water and they destroy crops. You need to hear from the people because they can speak the reality.

Khartoum denies any humanitarian access to people. We tried to reach an agreement. We can’t trust Khartoum to send aid. We need cross border help and we offered three locations. I took part in the talks.

People die from hunger and the international community does nothing. Khartoum with El Bashir is carrying out Genocide in Darfur.

Yesterday they attacked Blue Nile despite a ceasefire agreement. People are suffering so much and international community does nothing. We were civilians and became soldiers to protect our people and lands. Because GOS attacked our people, that is why we became soldiers. GOS mobilise local people (PDF, Rapid Defence Force, militias and murahaleen) to fight against us.

They abduct women and children and sell them in Khartoum. Many people don't know where their children are.

If GOS gains victory they will take many more civilians to use in military and sell them. This is genocide because the GOS kills the people and destroys the food. Pregnant women and children die when they have to run. We are defending our people. We have to defend our land where we are born.
3. Deliberate destruction of homes, school and civic buildings by SAF

We visited Karkarya Elbeera and other locations in Um Durein County where we saw the deliberate destruction by SAF ground forces and aerial bombardment by Antonov and long-range missiles.

In Karkarya Elbeera, we saw the remains of 31 homes in which people had been burnt alive and the rubble of a secondary school bulldozed by SAF infantry last April when they occupied the area for seven days.

Also in Um Durein County in Labate Village we visited the remains of the office of the Commissioner and of other offices associated with the work of the Council. In that aerial attack, two members of their staff were killed.

The GOS continues to inflict military offensives against innocent civilians through aerial bombardment with Antonov, MiG and Suhoy aircraft, long-range shelling and ground offensives with Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) causing death and injury directly and attenuated death and physical vulnerability through forcing thousands to flee from their homes to live in life-threatening conditions with severely impaired access to food, water and health care.

The people have built a large hut for a school, attended by 147 children who have no text books, and virtually no exercise books or pencils. The dedicated head teacher, Mustafa Muratt, works as a volunteer. The children sang songs to welcome us. We were told there are at least 130 more children living further down the mountainside who could attend the school but who are too frightened of bombs to make the journey.
Shelling continued while we were there: one missile landed on the other side of the mountain on the day before we arrived and we were told of further aerial bombardment while we were on location, causing some injuries. It was not possible to obtain details while we were there.

4. The continuing suffering caused by slavery inflicted by the GOS

Slavery has been perpetrated by the Sudanese Arabs against the African civilians from time immemorial. The GOS denies the practice of slavery but the evidence is abundant.

During the war instigated by the National Islamic Front regime (NIF) after its military coup in 1989, slavery became an integral part of the war jihad. In the borderlands between Africans and Arabs, such as northern Bah-El-Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains, the GOS soldiers, the mujahidin and murahaleen (militias armed by GOS and encouraged to capture slaves as their bounty) combined to undertake massive attacks resulting in the enslavement of tens (possibly hundreds) of thousands of African women and children. Men were usually butchered but some were also taken.

One such slave, Mende Nazar, was captured and abducted into slavery in 1994 from her village of Karko in the Nuba Mountains. She endured the horror of slavery for several years before being taken to London in 2000 to work in the Sudanese Embassy, from which she escaped. Her story has been documented in a book by Damien Lewis entitled ‘Slave’ and a play powerfully portraying the ordeals she endured was written and produced in theatre performances in London directed by Caroline Clegg. The play won the inaugural Media
Award (presented by the Human Trafficking Foundation) in 2010 presented at Speaker’s House on the national Anti-Slavery Day.

On this visit, Mende returned to the Nuba Mountains for a very poignant reunion with her people and her homeland. A film-maker, John Miles, accompanied the visit to document Mende’s historic return as well as the continuing suffering of the people of the Nuba Mountains at the hands of the GOS.

5. The resilience of the people of the Two Areas and South Sudan

The people of the Nuba Mountains have a rich, distinctive culture including singing with traditional instruments, dancing with traditional costumes and wrestling.

While we were in Kurchi, we were invited to a phenomenal display of these cultural traditions with contributions from the different tribal groups, performed in an open air arena with an enthusiastic audience of many hundreds of appreciative men, women and children. Similarly, in the refugee camp at Yida, we were invited to a similar performance by school children performing the unique dancing and singing of their own Nuba Mountain tribes.

The people told us that Khartoum may try to destroy them and steal their lands but they will never destroy the spirit of the people of the Nuba Mountains.
6. The International community’s duty to ‘Protect and Provide’

The demonstrable suffering of the people of the Two Areas inflicted by systematic policies of military offensives targeting civilians, destruction of food supplies and denial of food and medical care fulfils the criteria of genocide.

Whether or not that allegation is adopted, there is a manifest obligation on the international community to protect innocent civilians and to provide the means of survival.

As the people cannot accept aid from Khartoum, there is an urgent imperative to provide cross-border aid including food, medical supplies and provision for immunisation. Disease knows no borders; there is a measles epidemic in Kujurshabia, Kauda in the Nuba Mountains which has already cost the lives of at least 20 children. There is no Immunisation programme (EPI) anywhere in Nuba Mountains or Blue Nile, leaving children vulnerable to illness and death from preventable diseases.

There is also an urgent need for de-mining programmes because of the presence of many unexploded bombs, including cluster bombs and possible chemical weapons: there are reports (unverified) of people in close proximity to explosions with symptoms of burns, rashes, and blindness.

The people are dying and the need to fulfil the obligations to protect and provide is incontrovertible and urgent.

Benjamin Kuku, humanitarian aid worker in the Two Areas

*Khartoum has succeeded in misleading the world about what is happening in the Two Areas of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.*

*On the humanitarian front, Khartoum is denying access to humanitarian aid in the name of sovereignty. They are using hunger, ill health, illiteracy and traumatic stress as weapons against its own people in the Two Areas.*

*They use access to State facilities such as the media, Embassies and their allies such as Qatar and other countries in the Islamic world to continue misleading the world to affirm that the war is to defend Islam. This is not the case.*

*In Two Areas, our religions coexist in harmony. In one family, there can be a Christian, a Muslim and an ATR (African traditional religious follower) and there is no conflict on the basis of religion. Perhaps Khartoum targets the African indigenous people regardless of their religion or their rights.*

*Khartoum is interested in the land of the people but not with the people...*
...Cross-border aid is the only option left for the survival of the people in the Two Areas. We are calling for the UN to administer the cross-border aid. Khartoum will never allow aid to the people it is slaughtering. They cannot bring aid together with the bombs. And they cannot allow any other person to the people affected. So it is the duty of the international community to understand this simple truth and come to the rescue of the people in the Two Areas on the principle of the responsibility to protect and to provide.

Our message to the world: it isn’t our will to have war but there are violations of human rights and continuous bloodshed and people dying with no food or medicine so please intervene with aid and to stop the war.

7. South Sudan

We stayed in the refugee camp at Yida, were we met people from the Nuba Mountains who have had to flee for their lives from the GOS military offensives.

Life is very difficult, especially as UNHCR is trying to pressurise them to move to alternative locations. Many do not want to leave, as they wish to stay as near as possible to their homeland, to return if and whenever possible. Although UNHCR does not provide educational supplies, the resilient people maintain education and their culture.

Refugees from the Nuba Mountains retaining education and their traditional culture
Many of the Nuba Mountains child refugees put on a display of traditional dancing to make the point that, although they are in exile, the Khartoum Government cannot kill their spirit or destroy their culture.

We visited Wau, a major town in Bahr-El-Ghazal. This had been occupied by Government of Sudan forces in the previous war which raged from 1989-2005 and was notorious for being the final destination of the train which ran from El Obeid, generally known as ‘the Slave Train’. During the war, this train frequently brought military supplies to the Government garrison and returned with countless women and children abducted into slavery.

When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005, South Sudan was left with a devastated infrastructure, two generations of children bereft of education because of constant aerial bombardment, an acute shortage of professional personnel (for example, there were only eight qualified midwives for the whole of South Sudan) and many families bereft of loved ones by war, disease and slavery.

Subsequently, the civil war which erupted in 2013, severely exacerbated the difficulties afflicting the people of South Sudan – with widespread massacres, often on a tribal basis; massive displacement of civilians forced to flee for their lives and further destruction of homes and infrastructure.
The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that, in the latter months of 2016, there was a fear of impending Genocide as the early symptoms became apparent – such as the practice of using dehumanising names (‘Insects’) for people of different tribes.

This report does not discuss the complex political and economic context of the situations we encountered on this visit: these are already well documented and widely available. However, we encountered some of the evidence of the widespread problems: insecurity - with volatile situations associated with continuing tribal tensions and armed militias; severe shortages of food, education and health care, especially for IDPs; the economic problems caused by soaring inflation and a still-devastated infrastructure.

However, in the mist of these challenges and associated suffering, the people demonstrate amazing resilience, resourcefulness and achievement.

The Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol, Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Wau, describes the disappointment, sadness, challenges and problems and then puts these into the context of positive initiatives to help to build a better future. Excerpts from diocesan newsletter:

I think that I can be right if I say that since the referendum vote and South Sudan becoming a new nation, life here has changed but not improved.

At the time of the vote many people had great hope and this gave many people great joy. I still remember it and sometimes I wonder why we did not build on that as a people. Recently analysts and security experts are warning that there is now a looming possibility of genocide in South Sudan.

Many communities in South Sudan have been targeting and killing members of the Dinka community almost everywhere due to the belief that the Government belongs to them and so they are responsible for the mistakes of the Government. This situation has now reached its highest level with the killing of many ordinary innocent Dinka people on the Yei-Juba road, Nimule-Juba road and others too. This awful atrocity means many Dinkas are now very angry and they have started warning that they too will attack members of other communities living in their areas.

Please – it is important to know that the Governors where Dinkas are the majority community have already issued statements condemning those who wrote warning letters. A situation such as this cannot be ignored or permitted. As a church we need to join the political leaders by appealing to everyone to stop the killing. Even though President Kiir is a Dinka not every Dinka agrees with him or should be held accountable with their lives. Also it is very important that Dinkas must not take revenge on other communities because of the actions of a few...
...I would also like to appeal to our Archbishop and all other Church Leaders in South Sudan as well as the wider Church around the world to pray and take concrete action in order to avert this evil act. We should avoid genocide and learn from the example of Rwanda. We have permitted greed, hatred and ignorance to guide us in to times of killing and violence, really whose fault is that? I am sorry, we must say that it is our fault, all of us.

But the strange thing is that because I am a Christian I never give up on hope and I know, as most Christians do, that when there is hope the possibility of joy is never far away. South Sudan has passed through truly terrible times and so I believe we must look to one another not as enemies but as friends and seek to heal the wounds we have. Some wounds will take a long time to heal and we cannot pretend that this will be an easy thing to do, but I think it is a thing we must try to do if we ever want to stop killing and progress this nation. We must seek out hope.

Hope for education, education that is not just for children and not just for reading and counting but education that enables people. Teaching people to run a business enables them to have an income, it also means that someone else can do business too. No one does business to themselves, someone must buy what you are selling, so business can grow. Anybody can have a business but if you have education in business matters you will be able to be more successful which is good for everybody. Education is also needed for agriculture. There is abundant land here for growing crops yet so many are still using hand hoes which very much limits the land a person can plant with crops. People who have education in agriculture and can use Ox ploughs can farm a bigger area and grow more crops, they can also know how to grow better cops. Eating better is living better, who would not like to live better?

Here in Wau Diocese we have grown a college and I think that grown is the right word. It started very small and we have nurtured it as a project to slowly make it bigger and better. Now St John’s College of Theology and Development has many branches just like a mustard plant and is providing courses in business studies and helping people to complete the study that they may have started at school when they were children. St John’s does not just provide for Wau Diocese but for the whole Bahr el Ghazel area and also not just for Christians but for any person who wants to learn. We are especially proud to say that we offer spaces for women and look to have a minimum number in each class because too few of the women we rely on in our culture have the education that they really need.

I am proud also because we have been able to forge a fellowship with Bishop Barham University College in Kabale, Uganda. They have recognised the hard work of the college staff and also the need of people here. So connecting with them brings more hope because they have sent new teachers and staff to help us organise better and guide us. They also give us accreditation. This is a big word which means, for people who do not know us, St John’s college can really be regarded as a serious college. There is real hope here...
...We have organised Ox plough training for farmers and still have projects trying to gather funds for more. What is best about this is that the people keep the Ox and ploughs as part of the training. CARD our development organisation have spent much time helping people to improve their agriculture.

We are of course limited in all these wonderful activities by funds and I really appeal to anyone that would like to make a difference to improve life here in South Sudan, we have the ways, please help us. We look for your help but we will not wait for it because the alternative to making our lives better is to let them get worse.

We have not applied directly [for DFID funding] as we are a national NGO donors including DFID require us to apply through other international NGOs. The problem is that these require a lot of bureaucracy and technical work needing a lot of people with technician expertise. There aren’t many South Sudanese qualified to do so – and those who do have the qualifications end up with international experts who demand high salaries, transport costs, accommodation, medical cover and risk allowances. This is big money which could have gone directly to people in need....
The continuing suffering of the people suffering slavery at the hands of the GOS in South Sudan

The horrors inflicted by the brutal practice of slavery continue to affect the people of the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan: the families who lost loved ones as slaves, never seen again; those who suffered slavery and all who still suffer the aftermath.

Examples of the experience of slavery given by those whom we met now living in Wau

Maurice Majong Uliny, aged 45, from Alelthony (near Kuajok) in Kangi County

Maurice was captured by GOS Army and taken to Khartoum along with his five children and put in a camp for hostages where one of his children was sold to the Egyptian Government along with many others.

Many children’s bodies were found whose blood had been taken out for blood transfusion and they died. Some were taken to prison, some were tortured by beating and many were killed not by shooting but by beating and blood transfusion. So many were taken, men women and children - thousands.

GOS soldiers would also take kidneys from children and women in different places where South Sudanese located. There were also 40 men who were collected in an old train where they were burnt with benzene in 1988 in Dheen.
Regina Santino, aged 35, from the Luo tribe

Regina was born in Marchearkanyag in Aweil Town. When the militias arrived they burnt the house down, shot her mother and killed her father by machete. The children scattered but were later rounded up and taken to Dhen in Awol between Nyala and Babanusa. They were severely beaten. She was about three years old, her sister was seven and her brother eight. Her brother was given a Galabia to wear but he refused to convert to Islam and was beaten constantly. She later heard when she had escaped that some were beaten to death because they would not convert to Islam.

They lived in a straw hut in the garden and were threatened that if they tried to escape they would be killed. Her sister had to cook, clean and look after the children in the house to which they were taken, which belonged to a rich Arab. Her sister looked after her until she was old enough to work when she was six or seven-years-old.

They were only allowed to eat the scraps of food after the family had eaten. Her brother had to herd cattle. He slept on a mat with the cattle at night but came back to the house at the end of each week. He was always threatened that if he didn’t come back they would kill his sisters.

Their uncle (their father’s brother, a teacher in Bar-el-Ghazol) found out where they were being kept. He went to the house and said that he wanted to take his nephew and nieces home but the owner refused and said they would shoot the children if he came back. The uncle found out where his nephew was herding cattle and made an escape plan. When he went back to the house he would tell his sisters that they would get out of the compound when he went to herd the cattle and that their uncle would pick them up in a car. This is how they escaped after six years of slavery.

Malek Wai aged 42, from Nyamlell, Aweil North

Captured in 1987 with many other boys, brothers and sisters. They heard the sound of the railway train and were captured by murahaleen on horses who bound them and forced them to move on foot from Nyamlell to Meyram. Three days footing. When they reached Meyram they were divided to work with cows, others to cultivation.

He was sent to look after cattle with his friend, Deng, who was very old, and had to look after goats. He was too weak and they killed him. While working as a slave, they tried to force him to become a Muslim and pray with them. He said ’Never!’ They tried to treat him in a good way as they wanted him to stay with them and to forget his family and become a Muslim. He escaped and fled to Darfur where he stayed for some years and went to Khartoum, where he survived with manual work.
Conclusions

1. We are deeply concerned by the suffering of the people in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State and we call on the international community to end the impunity with which the Government of Sudan is continuing genocidal policies of the civilians there, through military offensives and denial of access to life-saving humanitarian aid, especially food and medical supplies.

2. We share the widely publicised concern over the many problems in South Sudan, caused by many aspects of the political leadership, the economic crises and intercommunal conflicts, responsible for the massacres of countless civilians.

3. However, we are encouraged by the resilience of the peoples of South Sudan and the many initiatives, especially those at the local level, to promote initiatives to provide much-needed education, health care, agriculture and other initiatives to alleviate suffering and to address many serious problems. We are also encouraged by the efforts, particularly those undertaken by the Churches, to promote reconciliation between tribal groups who have been involved with bitter conflicts, involving massacres, rape and other acts of terror.
4. We are also concerned that many of these local leaders are unable to access funding from large-scale donors, especially DFID, because of the bureaucratic requirements and we urge such donors to consider how to make funds available for local leaders undertaking programmes to supply essential services, including education, health care, agricultural development and small-scale entrepreneurship, giving financial independence, self-esteem and dignity.

5. We are concerned that much of the discussion by the international community regarding South Sudan focuses exclusively on the (very real) problems but fails to recognise the positive developments. This virtually exclusively negative portrayal of the situation may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy that South Sudan will become a ‘failed State’. We believe it is therefore also important to recognise, affirm and encourage positive developments (especially those at a local level which can give hope to the people and help to build foundations for a better future for this nation, whose people have suffered far too much for far too long – but who are still there and working hard to promote peace, democracy and a better quality of life for the world’s newest nation which has had to contend with such horrendous suffering and such innumerable challenges.

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- In South Sudan: We record our deep gratitude to the Rt. Revd. Bishop Moses Deng Bol for all the work he undertook to make our visit in Wau so meaningful, for his hospitality in the Guest House. We also thank all those who met us and who provided us with information as well as their personal stories.

- We are very grateful to the Mende Nazar Foundation for giving us the privilege of sharing this visit with them and the opportunity to witness the return of Mende to her homeland. We will never forget the moving experiences of her meetings with her own people and her courage, dignity and grace maintained in every situation.
Itinerary

January 8 Arrive in Juba. Meet Benjamin Kuku, New Sudan Council of Churches and those who take humanitarian aid to Blue Nile State, for an update of the situation there; and Martin Bolus, Liaison Officer, Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation NRRDO) Juba Office.

January 9-12 Visit Nuba Mountains via Yida

January 13-16 Bahr-El-Ghazal, as guest of the Anglican Bishop Moses Deng Bol, of the Diocese of Wau.

January 16-17 Further meetings in Juba with Benjamin Kuku and Martin Bolus for checking accuracy of data and final updates on the 2 Areas. Depart for UK.