



**Briefing for Parliamentarians**  
**The situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Sudan**  
**December 2014**

**Summary**

For the past three years, the government of Sudan has denied international aid organisations and the media access to non-government controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile States.

At the same time, it has conducted a systematic and deliberate campaign of aerial bombardment and ground offensives against the civilian population living in rebel held areas. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, 2041 bombs have been dropped on civilian targets. Aerial bombardment has been targeted at hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and markets, as well as destroying villages and crops. Government forces advancing into rebel-held areas systematically burn and destroy homes, water sources and other infrastructure necessary for survival. This suggests a deliberate effort by the Government of Sudan to destroy the institutions necessary for survival.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forced to flee across the border into South Sudan where they face further violence, or to take shelter in caves (in South Kordofan) or river banks (in Blue Nile). Fear of attack, displacement and destruction of buildings, fields and markets are fuelling food insecurity and disrupting access to education and healthcare.

In November 2014, a policy briefing by the Enough Project, which campaigns against crimes against humanity, concluded that *“Taken together, the desperate situation of the people in rebel-controlled areas, the Sudanese government’s aid blockade, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, along with statements recently attributed to senior commanders in the government forces, lay the foundation for a case of crimes against humanity by extermination.”*<sup>1</sup>

According to Sudan expert Eric Reeves the Government of Sudan’s military campaign against civilians, not only in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, but also in regions including Darfur and across southern Sudan, now South Sudan, during the civil war, is *“unique, presently and historically. Never has a recognized government and member of the United Nations, over many years, deliberately and extensively bombed, strafed, and rocketed its own citizens—with almost complete impunity.”*<sup>2</sup>

We urgently need to end the culture of impunity which allows the Government of Sudan to continue attacking its own citizens on a massive scale without fear of consequence.

**Security Situation and Attacks on Civilians**

November marks the beginning of Sudan’s dry season, usually correlating with an increase in fighting. Last year’s fighting season was particularly destructive, with 800 bombs dropped in the region<sup>3</sup> and more than 100,000 people displaced from the Nuba Mountains alone.<sup>4</sup> Ground attacks and aerial bombardment escalated in November as predicted. The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported 28 Antonov bombing raids throughout the month, dropping more than 130 bombs in 20 different villages. This resulted in the damage or destruction of more than 70 households and deaths of 4 people.<sup>5</sup>

Also this month, the Sudan Armed Forces have repeatedly bombed weekly markets that are known to happen each week at a specific time and that are easily visible as civilian areas from the air. This suggests a continuation of the deliberate targeting of clearly identifiable civilian infrastructure, as has been seen in previous dry season offensives. In Spring 2014, for example, aerial attacks targeted four health facilities in South Kordofan, including dropping 13 bombs on the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, the only hospital in the Nuba Mountains. Two MSF clinics were also attacked.<sup>6</sup> All were clearly identifiable as health facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Enough project, November 2014. Extermination by Design: The Case for Crimes against Humanity in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains. <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/ExterminationByDesign-PolicyBrief-EnoughProject-Nov2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Eric Reeves, May 2011, *“They Bombed Everything that Moved” - Aerial military attacks on civilians and humanitarians in Sudan, 1999 – 2011*, [http://www.sudanbombing.org/reports/Full\\_Sudan\\_Bombing\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sudanbombing.org/reports/Full_Sudan_Bombing_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Nuba Reports, ‘6 children killed in market bombing’, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014, <http://nubareports.org/five-children-killed-as-fighting-season-starts-in-the-nuba-mountains/>

<sup>4</sup> Nuba Reports, ‘Bombings Exceed 2000 As Peace Talks Begin’, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014, <http://nubareports.org/bombings-exceed-2000-as-peace-talks-begin/>

<sup>5</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014, ‘Protection Report #3’.

<sup>6</sup> Nuba Reports, ‘Khartoum’s War on Sudan: When Civilians Are They Enemy’, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014, <http://nubareports.org/khartoums-war-on-sudan-when-civilians-are-the-enemy/>

During the last month a number of organisations, including HART's partners, have reported military build-up and active recruitment of militias by the Government across South Kordofan and Blue Nile, with support from the Sudan Armed Forces, indicating preparation for a major offensive. This has resulted in widespread fear.

There is a significant risk that military escalation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile in the coming months could merge with the conflict in South Sudan, particularly affecting areas such as Maban and Unity State.

### **Humanitarian situation**

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 940,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Blue Nile and South/ West Kordofan. The UN does not have access to non-government controlled areas. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) estimate that in non-government controlled areas there are 800,000 civilians who have been internally displaced or severely affected by conflict.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 223,957 refugees have fled into South Sudan from South Kordofan and Blue Nile. A further 35,038 people are estimated to be living as refugees in Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup>

### **South Kordofan**

In September 2014, Najwa Musa Kinda, director of a Nuba based NGO, stated: *"The Nuba in South Kordofan are on the brink of starvation. Owing to the constant bombardments on residential areas, as well as vast tracts of farmlands, the people have sought refuge under the ground or in the hills, where there is nothing to drink or eat."*

In November 2014, US-based NGO The Enough Project released the results of a comprehensive humanitarian needs assessment conducted in South Kordofan by an anonymous NGO.<sup>9</sup> Key findings of the assessment are as follows:

#### *Humanitarian Needs*

- 80% of non-displaced households and 77% of displaced households show unacceptable food consumption scores
- 70% of displaced households and 64% of non-displaced households are experiencing moderate to severe hunger
- To survive the lean season, 65% of households are restricting food consumption of adults to feed children, 81% are reducing the number of meals consumed each week; and 73% have been limiting their portion size at meals.
- 90% of households do not have enough food stocks to last one month and 49% do not have enough even for one week
- Fifty-three percent of households state that their children do not attend school regularly due to lack of money to pay school fees (37%) and insecurity (27%).

#### *Security*

- 30% of the population are currently displaced from their homes
- 92% of those displaced within the last eight months fled as a result of fighting
- 79% of households state they do not feel safe at home
- Women and girls report that sexual violence and rape are now serious concerns in the region, as a result of encroaching frontlines and proximity to enemy soldiers.

### **Blue Nile**

Similarly comprehensive results are not available for Blue Nile state, where the presence of humanitarian organisations is even lower than in South Kordofan. However, reports suggest that as early as October, households in Blue Nile had consumed the production from their gardens and were starting to rely on wild foods, a very negative indicator. HART's partners report that many are resorting to eating roots, and are sleeping in river beds (Blue Nile lacks the caves that afford some protection to those living in the Nuba Mountains).

The health situation is dire, with high incidences of malaria, diarrhoea, coughs and infections, with very little access to treatment. Mothers are particularly concerned back the lack of immunisations since 2011, and the lack of access to maternal health care.<sup>10</sup>

### **Evidence of deliberate starvation**

Before fighting resumed in 2011, President al-Bashir had declared that he would *"force the Nuba back into the mountains and prevent them from having food, "just as we did before."*<sup>11</sup> Such intentions have recently been repeated in the leaked minutes of a recent meeting between high-level Government officials.

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<sup>7</sup> UN OCHA, 'Humanitarian Snapshot, Sudan, 31 October 2014', [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\\_Humanitarian\\_Snapshot\\_31Oct14.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> UN OCHA, 'Humanitarian Snapshot, Sudan, 31 October 2014', [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\\_Humanitarian\\_Snapshot\\_31Oct14.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Enough project, November 2014. Extermination by Design: The Case for Crimes against Humanity in Sudan's Nuba Mountains. <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/ExterminationByDesign-PolicyBrief-EnoughProject-Nov2014.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit, 'Humanitarian Update: October 2014'.

In the minutes, Lt. General Aamir, Director of Military Intelligence and Security, states *“This year the Sudan People’s Army (SPLA-N) managed to cultivate large areas in South Kordofan State. We must not allow them to harvest these crops. We should prevent them. Good harvest means supplies to the war effort. We must starve them, so that, commanders and civilians desert them and we recruit the deserters to use them in the war to defeat the rebels”*<sup>12</sup>. This statement – *“we must starve them”*, is referring to the hundreds of thousands of civilians, primarily children, women and the elderly, who bear primary responsibility for agricultural production.

Lt. General Imadadiin Adaw, Chief of Joint Operations for the army, stated that they *“should attack them before the harvest and bombard their food stores and block them completely”*.<sup>13</sup>

These threats are backed up by the targeted attacks on fields and markets, and the growing food insecurity across South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The timing and geographical spread of attacks over the past year demonstrate a clear correlation with the planting and harvesting of food crops. This has resulted in 73% less land being cultivated,<sup>14</sup> indicating a deliberate intention to disrupt food production and to exacerbate food insecurity across the area.

In just the past week, local monitors and members of an international organisation witnessed the Sudan Armed Forces deliberately burning a number of large community farms in Dalami County (South Kordofan). They destroyed an estimated 4-500 fedans of sorghum fields, which could leave up to 1500 people with no staple food for a year.<sup>15</sup>

### **Requests of civil society to the British Government**

*From members of a Sudanese civil society delegation during a Sudan/ South Sudan APG meeting on 20.11.2014*

- If Britain speaks, the regime in Khartoum listens. We appeal to the British Government to take the lead and speak out strongly for peace in Sudan.
- There is a critical need for more humanitarian relief – this is the most urgent thing.
- Please don’t support the election process. Elections can only come after the creation of an inclusive political environment, including guarantees of human rights, freedom of expression and an inclusive, holistic national dialogue. Civil society says clearly, no elections before a constitution and no constitution before peace.
- Please don’t provide debt relief – this is not the right time. There should not be debt relief until the Government of Sudan proves it is creating an environment that is conducive towards the national dialogue.
- The Government of Sudan has relied on tribal militias as a counter-insurgency policy. These militias have been given such a level of impunity that they are now involved in huge levels of civilian displacement and deaths.

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<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Tinsley, ‘The Nuba People: Out of Sight, Out of Mind’, *Genocide Studies International* 8, 1 (Spring 2014) 75 – 85.  
<http://utpjournals.metapress.com/content/t10q0h778377955w/fulltext.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Eric Reeves, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014, ‘Khartoum Announces a Campaign to ‘Starve’ the People of the Nuba Mountains’,  
<http://sudanreeves.org/2014/10/07/khartoum-announces-a-campaign-to-starve-the-people-of-the-nuba-mountains-eric-reeves-the-huffington-post-october-7-2014/>

<sup>13</sup> Enough project, November 2014. Extermination by Design: The Case for Crimes against Humanity in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains.  
<http://www.enoughproject.org/files/ExterminationByDesign-PolicyBrief-EnoughProject-Nov2014.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Unbroken Conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile,  
[http://www.sudanconsortium.org/member\\_publications/2014/Unbroken%20Conflict%20in%20South%20Kordofan%20and%20Blue%20Nile.pdf](http://www.sudanconsortium.org/member_publications/2014/Unbroken%20Conflict%20in%20South%20Kordofan%20and%20Blue%20Nile.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014, ‘Protection Report #3’.