



HART

## HART Visit to South Sudan, Nuba Mountains (Southern Kordofan) and Blue Nile

January 4-18<sup>th</sup> 2013

*“For the sake of human rights, peace and equal rights you have ventured to places where even our soldiers would not venture to go.”*

*Government of South Sudan minister in Juba to HART delegation*



*Blue Nile Youth Plea: 'Stop Aerial Bombardment'*

## **Itinerary**

Visits to Yida and Doro Camps, South Sudan  
3 days and 2 nights in the Nuba Mountains  
2 days in Blue Nile State  
3 days in Wau, Bahr-El-Ghazal  
3 days in Juba

## **Meetings**

The report that follows includes information based on interviews with community leaders, NGOs and displaced civilians in the refugee camps in Yida and Doro, as well as those whom we met on our visits to various locations in the Nuba Mountains and to Yabus, Soda and Wadaga in Blue Nile State.

In Juba, we also met with Rt. Hon. James Wani Igga, Speaker of the National Legislative Assembly; the Education Minister Health Minister and Deputy Foreign Minister for South Sudan; representatives of UNHCR and the British Ambassador.

## **Background to current crises on Sudan's border**

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which enabled South Sudan to become an independent nation left the 'marginalised areas' of Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile under the control of the National Congress Party (NCP) of the Government of Sudan (GOS), with provision for 'Consultations' in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and a separate referendum in Abyei.

### **1. Southern Kordofan**

#### **Conflict, Human Rights Violations and Collateral Problems.**

- Conflict erupted in June 2011, when the NCP tried to disarm the SPLA-North forces unilaterally - with no comparable disarming of SAF. When SPLA-N resisted, GOS began military offensives, including sustained, continuous aerial bombardment of civilians.
- SAF forces perpetrated atrocities in Kadugli, murdering civilians in their homes, the streets and directly outside the UN compound.
- Sexual violence was used in the early stage of the war, especially in Buram and nearby areas, with many rapes; and there have been recent reports of rapes of 5 women in Ummarah.
- In December 2012, NCP arrested 70 women in Kadugli and sent them to prison in El Obeid; nobody knows what has happened to them.
- Now, with SAF Forces concentrated in Kadugli, Dilling, Abu Talodi, Abu Adu Jibiha, and with the start of the dry season, escalating ground offensives are expected.
- Sustained aerial bombardment is continuing; local reports suggest that Khartoum is not targeting military bases but civilians, often bombing markets and schools, or random attacks on civilian areas. The bombardment is intended to drive people from SPLA-N controlled areas; the people have preferred to flee to South Sudan, especially Yida.
- Bombardment of the Nuba Mountains occurs daily; when ground offensives are operational, the number of bombs dropped may reach 60 per day. Aerial bombardment has increased in the past months, with particular targeting of Kauda in December.
- Variable types of bombings were widely reported: until November 2011, NCP were only using bombardment by Antonios and helicopters; subsequently, they have deployed long-

range shells (Uishi missiles) and more recently incendiary bombs to burn buildings, grass and crops.

- There are reports that SAF have used anti-personnel mines and cluster bombs (with Farsi writing) in Dadoko.
- The Nuba people reported that Khartoum has attempted to impose 'Divide and Rule' policies and that they have failed: they have failed to divide Arabs and Africans; and failed to divide Muslims and Christians. The Nuba people have a tradition of complete religious tolerance. When NCP tried to introduce Sharia law in Kadugli, this was resisted by both Muslims and Christians.



***Peace High School for Girls, Kauda***

### **The Humanitarian Crisis**

- The NCP has reneged on agreements to allow access by humanitarian aid organisations to reach civilians in need of food, clean water and health care.
- As a result of continuing aerial bombardment, sometimes at a rate of several bombings a day, as well as at night, over 100,000 civilians have fled from their homes. Displacement of new families continues to occur weekly.
- Hundreds of other families have taken refuge in caves where they live in danger of deadly snakes, often far from access to food or clean water. As one woman said: *'We have been living in the caves since June 2011, despite deadly snakes. We just pray to God to protect us from the snakes.'*
- The sustained aerial bombardment has also prevented people from planting or harvesting crops, causing serious and escalating malnutrition and associated diseases. Heiban County has been most affected, with an estimated 80% crop failure.
- We were shown the kinds of roots and wild fruits which they are now forced to eat, with little nutritional value, often causing gastro-intestinal problems.
- There is an acute shortage of health care provision and no Immunization Programme (EPI). One health worker was deeply critical of the failure of the international community to provide resources for EPI:

*'UNICEF is not providing vaccines because this is 'cross-border' so it is not possible to provide Immunizations although all the equipment for cold chain storage is available. Therefore, there is high incidence of cases which should be prevented such as pertussis and measles. It is madness that UNICEF won't provide vaccines for children: these can hardly be given to soldiers.'*



***Mother and child living in a cave in the Nuba Mountains***



***Families who have fled to caves in the Nuba Mountains***

**The commitment of Nuba people to the preservation of their identity and culture**

The Nuba people report that war has strengthened their passion to retain their traditional culture and identity: many are now using traditional Nuba names instead of Arabic family names. They claim that Khartoum's policy has backfired: instead of 'Divide and Rule', it has strengthened their solidarity and passion for their original identity, culture and religious freedom.

## **Refugee situation**

- At least 58,000 people from Nuba Mountains have fled to Yida Camp; with the new dry season, many thousands more are expected to arrive. There are already many problems, with inadequate nutritional food, education and health care provision.
- Those arriving in Yida include families with babies and young children who have to walk long distances without adequate food or clean water, often arriving severely exhausted and malnourished.
- UNHCR's policy to pressure those in Yida to move to a new camp at Niyal has exacerbated the problems. UNHCR will only provide emergency rations, with a very basic diet of sorghum, excluding oil, sugar, salt. It has prevented funding for schools – leaving 13,000 primary school children and young people with little access to education or training programmes. The community have created four schools staffed by local teachers to provide some basic education.
- The IDPs resist relocation as the alternative site is 'swampy' with risk of widespread malaria in the rainy season. They feel that UNHCR is using blackmail. UNHCR's justification is the unacceptable proximity to the border and claims that the camp is used as a base for SPLA-N soldiers.
- While this impasse persists, the refugees in Yida suffer from the limitations imposed by UNHCR.

## **2. Blue Nile**

The situation in Blue Nile is at least as serious, if not worse, than that in the Nuba Mountains. The humanitarian crises caused by sustained aerial bombardment are just as devastating, but there has been less exposure of the situation by international media; and as the terrain is flat, there are no mountains to afford some protection from bombardment.

### **Conflict**

- Ground fighting is continuing in and around Kurmuk and the Ingessana Hills. SAF have shelled civilians living around these areas.
- There is sustained ruthless bombing of civilians by bombs from Antonio's targeting markets, schools and other gatherings of people. We were told that the Antonio's drop bombs on 'anything which moves'. Bombing occurs several times each day.
- We were also told that the bombs used include 'large' 500kg bombs which kill and wound with shrapnel and 'smaller' bombs which are reported to emit a gas on explosion which causes temporary disorientation, coughing, skin rashes and, later, epistaxis. Also, incendiary bombs have ignited fires that spread through markets, crops and grasslands.
- On December 12th 2012, 1700 civilians from Ulu Payam (Kurmuk County) left for South Sudan; they were attacked by SAF Sudan Armed Forces) ground forces, many were killed and many children scattered; only 700 of the original 1700 arrived in Maban, South Sudan.



**Yabus Market in Blue Nile State**

### **Humanitarian Situation**

*'We lived in the bush all through the rainy season, with no shelter, wet clothes; we are too frightened to build shelters as they will be bombed. We have no plastic sheeting, no blankets; we are cold and we just sit there in the rain.'*

- As in the Nuba Mountains, the situation is desperate: people are unable to plant or harvest crops because of aerial bombardment; many people have been forced to hide in the banks of rivers. People have developed some coping mechanisms, such as foraging for food – roots of trees, wild plants – but these become very scarce in the dry season. In what should be the 'fat season', people are already reporting empty food stores and death from starvation.
- There are already very high levels of food insecurity in the areas around Charli, Kurmak and Wadaga. We were told around 48 people have died in Charlie and 450 in Wadaga since the start of the conflict.
- IDPs in these areas currently eat only one meal a day, and in some cases only one meal every three to five days.
- There is acute concern over the implications of the war for children, especially the difficulty of providing education: schools have been destroyed aerial bombardment discourages children from attending school. There are no functioning schools in conflict affected areas of Blue Nile.

### **Refugee Situation**

- Tens of thousands have been forced by the aerial bombardment and associated problems of lack of food, education and health care, to flee from Blue Nile either into Ethiopia or South Sudan to the four camps in Maban County [Approx. 115,000].
- Overcrowding in the camps in Maban County has given rise to outbreaks of Hepatitis B. We were informed that there was some fear of cholera outbreaks due to the conditions.  
*'We have to keep moving all the time. We try to feed our children and they have no school. We didn't bring our children with us today for fear of the Antonio's.'*



***IDPs in Blue Nile display their 'food'***

### **Commitment to Stay in Blue Nile**

We heard repeatedly from many local people a commitment to remain in Blue Nile: *'This is our land. We have made a decision that we will never leave. We are fed up with running. We don't where to go. Now we will never go to another people's land. President Omer Al-Bashir is there but we do not like him. We will fight until he kills us or we will finish him. We will not go to the North or the South. Perhaps we will die here but we will not run.'*

*'From what we have seen of Khartoum's Government, we cannot accept them. We spent 10 years in the bush in the first war because of Khartoum. If the Antonio's kill us under the trees, we shall be free – but we will never live under Bashir again.'*

### **Humanitarian Access**

The harvest in both South Kordofan and Blue Nile has been very poor. Aerial bombardment has made growing crops difficult and has destroyed many of the crops that were planted. Some areas have had no harvest at all.

In July 2012, Khartoum 'accepted' the tripartite proposal for Humanitarian access into South Kordofan and Blue Nile – but so far all aid has been prevented. The Tripartite Agreement is seen as having done more harm than good, because without it, people would have made the journey to South Sudan earlier. The Agreement's false promises gave them hope - they waited for months, living on roots of trees and whatever they could scavenge. When they finally decided to move, many were too exhausted to carry children and to undertake the journey to the South.

Local people perceive Western Governments who accepted the Agreement as complicit with the results of Khartoum's deception.

### **3. Abyei**

#### **Renewed Conflict and Violations of Human Rights:**

- Abyei was invaded by GOS armed forces (SAF) in May 2011 with widely reported atrocities including killing, rape and torture of civilians. The Sudan People's Liberation Army responded, resulting in fierce fighting; these forces were subsequently withdrawn by the

Government of South Sudan (GOSS) in accordance with the Abyei Protocol. The Khartoum government has failed to keep the agreement to withdraw SAF troops who still remain in Defra and some other locations.

- Thousands of civilians fled from Abyei into Bahr-El-Ghazal, living as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in very difficult conditions (see HART Visit Report, January 2012); some have returned but many are too afraid of the SAF forces to return home.
- There are reports of an attack by SAF forces in Kitgit this January 2013 in which women and children were killed.

### **Forthcoming Referendum**

A referendum on joining Sudan or South Sudan is due in October 2013. There are disagreements over identification of those eligible to vote, particularly the nomadic Misseriya people who regularly come south in the dry season to graze their cattle.

Other outstanding problems include failure to reach agreement over the border between Sudan and South Sudan; the continuing presence of SAF forces in Defra with their terrorising effect on civilians, deterring many of them from returning to Abyei; this leaves them eking out an existence as IDPs and could affect their eligibility to vote in the forthcoming Referendum.

## **4. South Sudan**

At meetings in South Sudan, the following issues were raised:

- **Relationship with Sudan:** Relations between the two countries are strained with bombs regularly falling across the border into South Sudan.
- **Border demarcation:** The importance of the buffer zone between Sudan and South Sudan in order to prevent attacks across the border was emphasised. In particular for a “third party to witness what happens here”.
- **International pressure:** Ministers in South Sudan felt international pressure has not been substantially brought to bear on Khartoum. We were told ‘The Government there continues to want to discuss agreements that have already been signed.’
- **Education:** is recognised as a major challenge in South Sudan. In particular, education of girls. This is a legacy of war as well as traditional practices including early marriage and early pregnancy. At present, approximately 37% of school enrolments are girls, but there are fewer than 1000 girls in the top year of secondary education in the entire country. There was also an emphasis on the importance of teacher training.
- **Health:** South Sudan continues to have high morbidity and mortality rates, especially for children under 5. Approximately 25% of patients admitted into hospital have malaria. Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are also prevalent. The current focus is on developing primary health care programmes and training health care professionals, particularly nurses, midwives and clinical officers. Vaccination rates have risen to 27% of the population.
- **Budget:** With the oil pipeline turned off, there has been upheaval in the economy of South Sudan. The austerity budget of 2012 has made it difficult to provide basic services including healthcare and education. At present education constitutes 7% of the budget and health less than 3%. Many teachers are voluntary.

## 5. Recommendations

- The international community must require Khartoum to cease immediately the aerial bombardment of the civilians in Blue Nile & Southern Kordofan so that civilians can return to their homes, live in security, harvest their crops and begin to restore essential services including education and health care.
- The UN Security Council (UNSC) should initiate an Investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) into war crimes and/or crimes against humanity perpetrated by the NCP in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. If the UNSC will not agree a Resolution to this effect, an alternative appropriate body should initiate this request to the ICC.
- Urgent provision of humanitarian aid to IDPs in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. Failure to respond to their needs can be seen as complicity with Khartoum's policy of attempted ethnic cleansing of the civilians from these lands. In the words of one medical doctor: *'Deliberately to deny life-saving aid is a crime against humanity'*.
- The dispute between UNHCR and the refugees in Yida Camp needs urgent resolution as the limitations on assistance imposed by UNHCR is highly detrimental to the nutritional status, health and educational needs of the refugees in Yida.
- The international community should require the NCP to withdraw all SAF forces from Abyei to prevent terrorising civilians and dissuading them from returning to their homelands.
- There should be an investigation into the reported atrocities perpetrated by SAF forces in Kitgit.
- There should be an immediate investigation into the situation of the 70 women arrested in Kadugli and reportedly transferred to prison in El Obeid.

## 6. HART PROJECTS

### 6:1 WAU and BAHR-EL-GHAZAL

#### **6:1:1 Emergency Relief and Micro-Credit**

Full reports had been received from the Bishop's staff regarding the funds previously given for these two purposes; which were largely funded by Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, and assisted by All-Saints Church, Fulham.

#### **6:1:2 Vehicle**

\$US20, 400 was provided by HART to pay the main cost for a robust, but second-hand, vehicle for the diocese. The remainder of \$5,000 was provided by the Anglican Relief and Development Fund (ARDF). The HART visitors travelled in and inspected the vehicle and were satisfied with the use of the funds and the standard of maintenance. Like many other organizations HART is careful in funding vehicles. (The only other funding for a vehicle was in Timor-Leste in 2006 to enable transport of sick children).

#### **6:1:3 St. Mary's Girls' School and Clinic in Wau East Bank District: Capacity building, including projects management and communications.**

HART awaits proposals for these and will seek funders.

## **6:2 MAROL ACADEMY (Luonyaker)**

“A Girls’ school which boys may attend”; such is the description and the vision of this school. On the 11<sup>th</sup> January we met teachers and the Board of Governors. HART has been strongly supporting the work of this school since 2008 (particularly the work of Naomi Pendle and the teacher training programme), as described in previous HART Visit Reports. HART continues to seek funding for a scheme seeking to increase the retention of girls at secondary school (a problem considered even worse in the Bahr-el-Ghazal area than in the rest of South Sudan) and, thereby to increase the number of young women trained in midwifery and maternal and child health. In Nairobi, we met the superb organization, FOCUS, who supply volunteer, but well-educated, teachers each year, essential to the expansion of the Secondary schooling at Marol Academy.

## **6:3 BLUE NILE**

HART’s recognition of the dire conditions within Blue Nile has been deepened by the present visit. During 2012, we provided funds for emergency food aid and for the transport of medical supplies. In both cases we have received good reports and accounts; and during this visit, we received on-the-ground confirmation in villages that local people had received and benefited from the aid. We gave further funding during the visit for more emergency food aid. We are also pursuing an additional proposal with a specific funding organization; and we continue to encourage governments and international organizations to consider providing indirect aid to reach these populations in such need in order to save lives and to reduce the need for them to have to flee across the border to the already crowded refugee camps.

## **6:4 NUBA MOUNTAINS**

*HART previously supported the establishment and operation of 3 Centres for Widows and was preparing to expand the number to six. However, the renewed war has stopped the programme and, we are sad to report, one of the widows at the Heiban Centre has been killed by the aerial bombardment.*

*We currently have present proposals for Emergency Food Relief & for Education for which we are seeking funding.*

## **6:5 CAMPS AT YIDA AND DORO**

We visited both and studied the conditions but decided there was no need for aid from HART but we will continue to fulfil our advocacy mandate.

## **6:6 YEI (Western Equatoria)**

HART has concluded an extended period of partnership with Bishop Elias Taban, during which we provided funding for the building of 6 Primary Health Care Clinics, support for orphans and for an agricultural programme.

WE conclude our report with the words of appreciation recorded by Bishop Taban of HART’s crucial support in the early days of the development of his programmes:

## **'APPRECIATION**

*As we have progressed through 2012...we have a number of new partners who are joining with us in various projects throughout the nation of South Sudan. These projects are expanding the level of ministry that we are able to undertake, throughout our young nation. Our influence is also continuing to grow both internally in South Sudan and internationally.*

*Last year, it was my privilege to be invited to the UN Headquarters in New York for discussions on the Small Arms Trade Treaty, during which I was able to meet the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. During a visit to Juba, I was invited to a meeting with US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, and in September I was awarded a Clinton Global Citizen Award by the Clinton Global Initiative.*

*My reason for listing these is to show my deep appreciation to those partners, like HART, who supported us in the very beginning. While we were still small and our work was not well known, it was difficult to gain access to donors and supporters who were ready to work through us to serve the people of South Sudan. But in those times, HART stood with us, supported us and encouraged us. And I want to take this opportunity to thank Baroness Caroline Cox and all the staff at HART for their long-standing support, which has helped to bring us to where we now are.*

*My heartfelt appreciation for all that you have done,  
Bishop Elias Taban.'*

## APPENDIX:

### Interviews in Blue Nile and South Kordofan (Abridged)

#### Interview in the Moro Hills, Nuba Mountains

*“Antonio’s are dropping the bombs; that is why we are sitting here. Sometimes it drops ten times in a day. We don’t have sorghum to eat. All of our clothes have been lost. The water is very far.*

*If there is a long range missile we just have to lie down in the ground. Sometimes the Antonio’s come while we are collecting water. We leave the children in the caves.*

*There are fruit and roots here. We have traditional roots for medicines.*

*The pregnant lady here will sit inside the cave to have her baby. There is no soap, only water.*

*We haven’t planted – only in a few small places and it is not enough. The stores are finished and it is still early [until the next harvest in September]. We are eating our seeds and we won’t be able to plant again. “*

#### Grandmother in Moro Hills, Nuba Mountains

*“I am just sitting by the cave and I am hungry and tired”*

#### Interviews in Blue Nile

*“When I heard the sound of Antonov I ran to the well had dug for up to 2 hours until the Antonov had left. Then we came out to find food.*

*The Antonov came for 6 or 7 days. It always comes on Thursday because they know it is a market day on Thursday. When there is a market day, the Antonov will come.*

*During market day all the people gather there and if they see the Antonov they run into the bush.*

*We are civilians and we did not have anything to do with him [Bashir]. Now, when he sends the Antonov, we run and hide.*

*My son was killed. I am so sad because I lost my child. He was one year old.*

*We want the Internationals to talk to Bashir to stop killing his people like this so that we can continue living on our land, giving education to our children, collecting clean water. We don’t want to leave our land.”*

DM, Blue Nile

*"I have 10 children. I don't know my age.*

*During the Antonov, I was there in the market. When it was bombed, I was there. I ran through the area where people had been killed and I cried. Then the Antonov came again and I ran and hid. Later, I thought, maybe the next time I won't run, I will die with my people.*

*I lost my best friend.*

*The Antonov is coming from the sky – there is nothing we can do. We are civilians and we don't have any power to stand in front of Bashir to say anything. We just want God to change his bad attitude. Let him not want to kill his own people anymore.*

*I don't know why he kills us. We are his own people. We don't know exactly the things that make him kill us and chase us. He is our brother and our leader. We don't know why he kills us.*

*Since I was born, I have lived here. When the Antonov comes, we run and hide in the banks of the river. Sometimes the children start crying 'I need food'. We say 'Where will I find food, Bashir is chasing us'. I try to go to the river to find a fish.*

*This is the land that was given to me by God, I want to stay here.*

*The life here is not good. When we hear the Antonov we run and hide ourselves. Life has become difficult; there is no food, no school, no clinic.*

*Let the UN or UK or American people hurry to tell Bashir not to kill his people like this. We want help with food. Let the peace come. We want our children to go to school.*

A (Mother of 6 children), Soda Village, Blue Nile

*We came running because of war and have been here one year. Even now we are suffering. There is no food to eat – we go to the bus for roots. There is no place that we can sit and live in a peaceful manner.*

*The war was a bit far from our village. But the Antonov drops the bombs on every village. It can bomb among the children, women and men. We went and hid ourselves in a small stream. It did not injure my children but it killed all our animals, our goats.*

*He [Bashir] wants to control all the land of ours. He bombs us because we are giving birth to boys.*

*I can tell them [the International Community] that we need only a peaceful country. Our children are running and there is no peaceful place. We ask the English people, please support us.*

*It is not easy. When we left our home village, our children were crying asking 'where are we going?' I told them we are running because of the war.*

Soda Village, Blue Nile

*I lost one of my brothers. We have not seen him but we are sure that he has died from the Antonov.*

AZ, Lawyer in Soda Village, Blue Nile

*We want to share with the centre [of Sudan], we just want our rights.*

*He [Bashir] said 'we don't want insects or black plastic bags in Blue Nile. Crush them out'.*

*All the countries must unite against those who do not want their people to live in peace. Some of the UNSC use their veto, why? He is a criminal.*

Chief, Sameri, Wadaqa Payam, Blue Nile

*There is a bombing every week or every day here. I am not going to leave the village, I will die here.*

*The bombing has killed some of the children and wounded some of the people. The last bombing was yesterday.*

*Have been put in charge of the people who remain. The previous chief has gone to Doro. The people here are suffering. Most people have gone to Doro but 575 people remain here in Sameri.*

Balleri, Wadaqa Payam, Blue Nile

*Five people were injured in a bomb four days go including three children. The bomb fell between my tukal and my neighbours.*

*We ran because of the Antonov to this place. Because of the fear of the Antonov coming to our village again. It comes and bombs other places every day.*

*We have decided to stay and live in our country.*

*I am an ordinary person; I don't know why my Government is bombing me. We are very poor people. What the Government is doing, we have no idea.*

*I ask the International Community to come and support us. They can come and arrest Bashir and take him out of power so that we can have peace.*