



**OFFICE OF THE UN RESIDENT AND HUMANITARIAN CO-ORDINATOR
FOR THE SUDAN**

25 January 2004
RCHC/SUD/Note 23

NOTE TO MR. EGELAND

Crisis in Darfur Region, Sudan

1. Thank you for your e-mail of 23 January. We have followed up on your suggestions as follows:
 - I made a personal demarche on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Nagib ElKhair) on 21 January, accompanied by the visiting OCHA HQ team of Kennedy and Boutroué. I did the same on 22 January, calling on the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs (Mohammad Youssef Abdalla, specifically responsible for Darfur) who was accompanied by the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner (Sulaf El Din). I have also spoken to them subsequently on the telephone.
 - I strongly put forward our concerns over Intifada Camp and Darfur in general, stressing the importance of protection, voluntary movement of IDPs, and humanitarian access. I raised with them reports that armed elements had subjected Intifada IDPs to intimidation, including through withdrawal of assistance by not allowing agencies to help them unless they moved. The result is that only a few hundred (but today HAC say there are 3000 in the new camp – to be verified) moved to the new camp, and most of the rest of the 9,000 people had disappeared into the surrounding region. The Humanitarian Ministry's response was that these criticisms were unjustified, and the State Minister stressed that the decision to move the IDPs was his personal decision. My attempts to initiate further detailed dialogue on these points was met with strong resistance, hinting at the fine line the UN was treading in terms of what was acceptable in our relations with the Government with whom we were expected to co-operate. They went on to say that we had access to most places in Darfur, and criticised the UN (particular agencies were named) for not being responsive, and failing to deliver on the ground.
2. I also convened a special meeting of our Darfur Contact Group on 22 January attended by diplomatic missions, UN agencies, ICRC, and NGOs at which the situation was extensively discussed, including a graphic presentation by MSF on the Intifada IDPs. The key diplomatic missions (led by the UK Ambassador), accompanied by agencies have made arrangements to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs (along with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs) on 26 January. After discussion and having pre-advised

HAC (in view of their sensitivities over the UN's close relations with donors), I have agreed that a small UN team can attend.

3. On the substantive issue of access, the reality remains that the UN has very little access at present when coming into the Darfur region from outside ie. only to El Fasher town. Recent WFP flights have not received clearance to go to Nyala and Geneina. More generally, Military Intelligence or National Security respond verbally (negatively) to our "access requests" through the Humanitarian Aid Commission (in Khartoum or through their local offices in Darfur) ie. we do not get a written refusal. More recently, HAC has even advised WFP in El Fasher not to submit requests for clearance to locations in North Darfur until further advised – ironically, these are the same places that HAC has asked us to assist. Another recent practice has been not to respond at all to requests for travel permits. I have requested OCHA here to produce a list of all requests and the responses (or non-responses) that ensue.

4. UN staff already on-site (we cannot fly in to Nyala with new staff as there are no flight clearances) have access to the nearly empty Intifada site and the new Belial site to which we are providing what assistance we can. Just prior to the abandonment of the Intifada Camp, WFP had done a one-month distribution of rations. As most IDPs have merged into the general population, we are doing our best to target local health and education institutions in Nyala. The only other IDPs who could be reached recently are those of Zalingi who receive aid (WFP and MSF) out of Nyala. In North Darfur (where there is no access outside El Fasher), an arrangement between WFP and local Sudanese Red Crescent has been brokered whereby the former is handing over food stocks to the latter for distribution in surrounding locations, despite concerns over acceptable monitoring and accountability. Even so, access for SRC and other local NGOs remain a problem, which I have drawn to the personal attention of the HAC Commissioner.

5. We will follow up further. I am going to southern Sudan today for two days but remain in close communication with our team in Khartoum who will provide any new updates over the next few days.

Mukesh Kapila