



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

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**NOTE TO AMBASSADOR VRAALSEN**

**Darfur – Eyewitness Accounts of Current Violence**

1. On 12-23 February, an international high-level delegation comprised of the UK Ambassador, the Dutch Chargé d’Affaires (in his capacity as EU representative), UNICEF Country Director and the Area Coordinator for Darfur, visited Geneina and El Fasher (West and North Darfur). The mission, which was well received by the local authorities (Deputy Wali and Wali, respectively), forcefully voiced its concerns about hindered access, violations of human rights, and absence of IDP protection. In view of the landmine incident of 12 February near Kornoi involving Save the Children-UK (two injured), the mission also stressed the importance of immediate risk assessment and mine action in Greater Darfur.
2. On its way from El Geneina to El Fasher, the mission reportedly witnessed from the plane some ten villages set ablaze. In Kutum hospital, they visited male patients who had recently been gunshot while they were attending their livestock. While local authorities stated that outlaws had perpetrated these attacks, IDPs claimed that the perpetrators were Janjaweed militias.
3. UN staff reported on the visit as follows:
  - “We witnessed systematic burning of villages. We saw at least seven of these, some just set on fire, others fully in flames, and the rest in recent ashes. We flew close to one village and saw its huts in flame, while a group of people or animals seemed to be huddled in the center of the village. In some villages the huts looked like rings since the roofs had been burnt off, while in others even the walls had been completely destroyed. Two of those that were still burning were located outside Geneina town. We also observed several army helicopters sitting on the ground in Geneina airport. It must be assumed that the villages we saw burning during our one-hour flight were only a small sample of the total number of villages burnt in Darfur that day. In our many flights above Darfur, we had thus far never seen any burning villages. In El Fasher Airport, we saw several army planes and one helicopter taking off, indicating that military activities were ongoing. SLA was reportedly active in the Kutum area”.
  - “We proceeded to Kutum, where a large number of civilians were suffering from recent gunshot wounds. Also, Kutum hosts in excess of 100,000 IDPs, whose numbers continue to rise - more than 7,000 IDPs reportedly arrived in one day alone. IDPs in the area reported on repeated Janjaweed attacks, including burning of villages. Further, the number of rapes (as compared to previous visits) seemed to be on the increase, especially in West Darfur. There was no evident security protection. IDPs in Ardamata camp near Geneina reported that Janjaweed had raped their women (as these were fetching water nearby) and had attacked the camp on several occasions, killing many IDPs and looting cattle. We have witnessed Janjaweed riders in Geneina town, with no evidence of efforts to control them.”

Dr Mukesh Kapila