



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

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**Overview**

1. Protection of civilians and in particular, IDPs, is the most pressing concern reported by the inter-agency assessment teams that have been able to interact with conflict-affected populations surveyed to date in the three Darfur states. There have been consistent reports and eyewitness accounts of systematic attacks of villages and IDP camps and the looting of humanitarian assistance distributed to vulnerable groups by the UN and NGOs. Some IDPs in North and South Darfur have cautioned the assessment teams not to distribute assistance under present conditions, fearing that such action might make them a more attractive target for looting and harassment. Urgent high-level, political intervention to ensure the protection of civilians and to provide security is therefore required. At present, the Jenjaweed militia attacks are carried out with impunity. Without increased and tangible security commitments from the authorities, the sustainability of future UN and NGO interventions to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Darfur region remains problematic.
2. Over the past week, despite continuing reports of military activity, the systematic burning of villages and the climate of general insecurity, humanitarian assessment teams continued to conduct rapid assessments in areas cleared by UN security. The teams in North Darfur have completed initial surveys of Tawilla, Kebkabiya, Birka Sayira, Saraf Oumra and Kutum areas. In West Darfur, Mornie, Kolbus, Azburki, Azerni and IDP camps around Geneina town have been surveyed. In South Darfur, The village of Karkole and Kailak and Aburumo IDP camps in Kass have been assessed. Additional locations are currently being assessed in and around Kass. Generally, most IDPs seem to be coping better than expected, however the assessment teams stress that their condition can be expected to quickly deteriorate unless the social and economic disruption caused by the violence is halted and the protection issue is addressed.
3. Assessment teams cite ongoing insecurity along major transport routes, the paucity of the number of implementing partners on the ground, and the very limited capacity of agencies currently operating in Darfur, as some of the major constraints inhibiting the establishment of full-scale humanitarian operations on the ground. Enhancing the capacity of humanitarian operations is an urgent priority as malnutrition and disease rates are already increasing and water is expected to become scarcer through the dry season. The humanitarian situation in Kutum is of special concern due to its overcrowded state and prevailing unsanitary conditions. The deployment of a four-staff UNDAC team to the three state capitals on 24 February and the arrival at Khartoum of the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) office support module (seven support team members to be deployed to the Darfurs as soon as permits and clearances are granted) should bolster capacity on the ground in the immediate term. However, a commitment to further increase the number of agencies and NGOs and the scope of their operations in Darfur is urgently required.

## **MAJOR HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENTS**

4. **North Darfur:** Within the reporting period, the following numbers of IDPs were estimated by the Rapid Assessment Teams: Kebkabiya (41,000), Birka Sayira (5,000), Saraf Oumra (49,000) and Tawilla (9,300 IDPs). The torching of villages by Jenjaweed militia in many areas is leading to an increased influx of IDPs into the camps and military activity in the eastern part of North Darfur is leading to difficulties in transporting supplies from El Obeid and other points east in the Sudan.
5. The humanitarian response is still not adequate to meet needs and pre-position stocks. The presence of humanitarian agencies is limited and those that are present are severely overstretched. The expected arrival next week of the NGO, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) in North Darfur is a welcome development; however, the inability of MSF-Belgium to get travel permits to North Darfur is a serious setback. More substantial interventions are needed especially in the field of shelter, NFIs and health - including for the clearance of animal carcasses in Kutum camp in order to improve the environmental sanitation situation. Some IDPs have recently been reported to be leaving Kutum for home areas in Fata Burno. This development will relieve some of the overcrowding in Kutum, but for any sustained return to occur, it is imperative that security guarantees be given for the safety of villagers in and around Fata Burno.
6. In almost all interviews, IDPs express fear for their lives and possessions, including for livestock and other agricultural pursuits. The major requirement is immediate protection - first and foremost over the delivery of assistance. The issue requires interventions at both the national and local authority levels.
7. **West Darfur:** Humanitarian assessments have been conducted in areas around El Geneina in Sissi camp, Azubuki and Azerni and Mornei camps. The security situation inside El Geneina town remains calm. In villages outside the town however, dwellings continue to be burnt on a regular basis. As in the other parts of Darfur, protection is cited as the most urgent and important priority by the Rapid Assessment Teams surveying new areas. Outright violence committed by militia forces includes attacks, rape, extortion and other forms of intimidation. MSF-France, operating in Zalengi and Mornei, reported that its recent distribution of blankets and other NFIs has been looted by returning Jenjaweed militia.
8. The capacity of humanitarian agencies in West Darfur is also severely limited. *Medair* is currently the only INGO operating in El Geneina. *Medair* is servicing areas around El Geneina town and is focusing on the provision of supplies and services to primary health clinics, the distribution of NFIs and the implementation of water and sanitation projects. The single largest national partner is the Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC).
9. It is understood that the national Humanitarian Assistance Commission (HAC) wishes to relocate IDPs around El Geneina town into two distinct camps (Aedamata and Um-Duwein). OCHA was able to visit the areas with HAC, but holds reservations about the feasibility and desirability of relocating IDPs at this time. The UN has strongly expressed the view that any movement of IDPs must be conducted on a voluntary basis as IDPs do not appear to want to move to these areas. Furthermore, the new identified sites would require urgent interventions to improve both security and basic living conditions. The issue will continue to be closely monitored.
10. **South Darfur:** The following numbers of IDPs were reported during the reporting period: Korole (3,000), Kailak camp (16,000) and Aburumo camp (9,000 IDPs). IDP numbers were reported to have increased from 4,500 to 5,000 in Kalma camp just outside of Nyala as a result of new IDP arrivals over the past two weeks. OCHA and WFP are currently conducting a verification mission to obtain a more accurate estimate of the caseload and IDP needs. A child protection task force has been formed under the Ministry of Social Welfare, comprising local NGOs and supported by UNICEF.

11. IDPs encountered during the recent assessment missions in Kass have insisted that ensuring their protection should be given the highest priority - attacks by the Jenjaweed are a constant reality. Some IDP representatives, including village elders, have expressed the fear that receiving humanitarian assistance at this time would only serve to increase the possibility of attack. Access to health care is reported to be the most pressing need in the areas assessed so far.
12. Similar to the situation in the north and west, the assessment teams are concerned about the lack of national and international implementing partners available to commence operations in Kass. It is vital for the credibility of the humanitarian community that the UN and NGOs be in a position to respond to need after the assessment missions have carried out their initial surveys.

### **CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES**

13. Inadequate infrastructure, coupled with insecure transport routes and the limited capacity of humanitarian agencies will hamper the delivery of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected populations in the newly accessible areas. UN agencies and NGOs have been discussing alternative logistical arrangements, including the use of centralized fuel facilities and delivery by direct airdrop, rather than using unreliable road transport from humanitarian supply hubs to site locations. Strategies designed to increase the capacities of agencies on the ground and to multiply the number of agencies working in Darfur are also being discussed. It is hoped that the operation of an additional WFP aircraft dedicated to humanitarian operations in the Darfurs will substantially increase the capacity of humanitarian partners to move personnel and supplies to and within the region.
14. The reports of incidents of looting of humanitarian supplies already distributed to IDPs and other vulnerable groups are of serious concern. To combat this problem, some agencies are considering altering their modus operandi; e.g. substituting supplemental feeding programmes, rather than direct food ration distributions, to prevent theft.

### **THE WAY AHEAD**

15. The need to more effectively advocate for the protection of civilians is a priority in discussions with GoS. This should be undertaken by donor governments represented in the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (HLWG), at the highest echelons of the GoS. A similar message will be continue to be conveyed to the local authorities by OCHA and key UN agencies working at the field level.
16. There is also an urgent need for the UN family to collaborate in finalising a comprehensive protection strategy for the Darfur region as a whole. The plan should be a template for training and advocacy to ensure that protection standards are universally applied as an adjunct to the delivery of relief assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable groups requiring assistance.
17. Finally, it is hoped that the principal NGO fora: INTERACTION, SCHR and ICVA will heed the call for more NGO implementing partners to mobilize personnel and relief materiel for humanitarian assistance operations in the Darfurs as soon as possible.

The next consolidated overview will issue on Sunday 07 March

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