

Darfur Update

14 September 2003

1 Introduction

The agreement between the Government of Sudan and the rebel Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M), signed on 3 September 2003 in Abache in Chad, stipulates the following: during the first fifteen days of the agreement a ceasefire will come into force; agreement will be reached on areas for the relocation of forces; all POWs will be released; irregular forces will be withdrawn once the forces are relocated and a tripartite committee will be established consisting of representatives from Chad, the Sudanese Government and the SLA.

The tripartite committee has now been established and has been meeting in el Fashir since 11 September¹. Both parties have acknowledged that all prisoners of war have been released. On 13 September, the parties carried out a reconnaissance to identify areas for the relocation for SLM forces. In recent days, fighting between the SLA and Government forces has stopped. Within forty-five days of signing the agreement, negotiations on a final agreement between the Government and the SLM/A are scheduled to commence in Chad. According to the text of the agreement, the SLM will be disarmed once a final agreement has been reached.

Sources close to the SLM/A have stated that the Government has proposed not to disarm the militias (*Janjaweed*) but to allow them to keep their arms and operate as a border patrol. A number of reports indicate that, although senior commanders might reach a final agreement with the Government, junior officers will not lay down their arms unless the militias are fully disarmed and other SLM demands are addressed.

2. Militias in Darfur

Abala, camel-herding nomads who migrated to Darfur from Chad and West Africa in the early 1970s, form the backbone of the *Janjaweed* militia in the Darfur. They are supported and directed by high-ranking officials and members of the Government in Khartoum. Prominent among the Abala are Irayqat and Awlad Zeid, sub-clans of the Rizeigat. Over past decades, in conflicts between settled farmers and nomads moving south in search of water and pastures, the Government has systematically sided with the Abala and other nomadic tribes. It has provided large numbers of them with financial resources, weapons, ammunition and political and legal protection for the atrocities they have committed, including attacking and burning villages, looting herds and burning crops. Those who support and direct the Darfur militias from Khartoum include the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Safi el Nur, an air force general and ex-governor of North Darfur State, who belongs to the Irayqat clan of the Rizeigat. He is reportedly directly responsible for *Janjaweed* camps in North and

¹ The SLM delegation to the talks in el Fashir comprises of members of the Fur, Zaghawa and Massalit tribes

West Darfur States. Other powerful members of the group supporting and directing the Darfur militias from Khartoum are the Minister of Foreign Trade, Abdel Hamid Musa Kacha, a Rizeigat, and retired General Hussein Gibriel, former Chair of the Security Committee² in the National Assembly, also a Rizeigat.

The past weeks have seen continued militia activity in Darfur. For example, from 25 August to 7 September organised attacks were carried out on 49 villages in Wadi Saleh in West Darfur State. The villages were torched and destroyed and thousands of people were displaced.

Incidents involving *Janjaweed* were also reported during the first week of September in Abuhajura and Kedinir, near Nyala in South Darfur State. On 12 September, with the support of regular army troops, *Janjaweed* attacked Todobia, in Wadi Sera in North Darfur State. A unit from the Justice and Equality Movement (a small force located in Wadi Sera in North Darfur State belonging to an armed group that did not sign up to the SLM/A-Government agreement) engaged with the militia, which suffered a number of casualties

3. Monitoring mechanism

It is important to ensure a monitoring mechanism for Darfur. In July, the Government's Deputy Head of Security provided the Civilian Monitoring and Protection Team (CPMT) with documentation allegedly proving SPLA involvement in Darfur. CPMT subsequently proposed both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SPLM/A to carry out a mission to Darfur. To date, the Government has not responded to CPMT's proposal. Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Joint Military Commission (JMC) if it would be willing to go into Darfur. However, neither CPMT nor the JMC have a mandate to become involved in Darfur. Rather than pressing for their involvement or setting up yet another separate operation, it would be better for the UN to take on the task of monitoring the situation in Darfur.

Ideally, both parties should agree to withdraw to agreed positions, and restrict their movements and those of militias aligned with them. Given the fact that the Government has often used helicopter gunships or Antonov aircraft in Darfur, the agreement should if at all possible also contain a provision restricting the use of military aircraft.

4. Conclusion

Sources close to the SLM maintain that the main reason for taking up arms against the Government are the underdevelopment of Darfur and the militia, and the destruction caused by the Government. There are increasing reports that junior officers will refuse to disarm unless the underlying causes for them taking up arms in the first place are addressed. Reports also indicate that a number of SLA rank and file members have joined the JEM. Should factions of the SLA refuse to disarm, low-intensity conflict is a likely scenario for the future of Darfur. It is therefore of crucial importance to sustain international pressure on the Government to address the issue of the militias, as is an increased effort to deliver humanitarian and development without delay.

² Hussien Gibriel is the current chair of the Social Services Committee of the National Assembly.

Darfur Update

26 July 2003

1. Introduction

During July 2003 there has been an escalation of the current conflict in Darfur. A mediation attempt undertaken by the Minister of Education and the Governor of River Nile State failed. The Civilian Monitoring and Protection Team (CPMT) has contacted both the Government and the SPLM/A with a view to seeing if there is a case for their involvement.

2. Incidents

On 12 July SLM forces captured Tinah, a border garrison town, north of Geneina, about 900 kilometers west of Khartoum. The SLM withdrew from Tinah that same day but launched fresh attacks two days later. According to Government reports on the incident of 12 July, 35 rebels and 13 Government troops were killed. The SLM claimed to have killed about 250 soldiers and captured a number of vehicles as well as sizable quantities of fuel and ammunition.

On 16, 17 and 18 July the SLM launched an attack on Dessa, north of Kutum. On 19 July SLM forces attacked Tawila, 58 kilometers southwest of el Fasher. Government and SLM estimates of the casualties incurred in Tawila vary widely. According to one estimate, 500 rebels and 300 Government soldiers were killed and approximately 400 Government soldiers wounded, 200 sustaining serious injuries. (The SLM claims to have lost none of its troops). Two policemen were also killed in the Tawila attack. The SLM seized weapons, ammunition and vehicles and destroyed a police station as well as other public building. Reports from Tawila indicated that the inhabitants of the town felt unthreatened during the SLM incursion and that many expressed their support for the SLM.

In the week of 15 July bombing raids by government forces were reported in Tinah, Kornoi and Umm Baro resulting in the complete destruction of the public hospital and other public building. The SLM claimed that heavy civilian casualties were sustained during the bombing which lasted six days, but reliable figures have not been provided. In press statements the SLM has accused the Government of releasing toxic gasses during this attack.¹

As there is no access to the conflict zone, figures on casualties and use of prohibited weapons cannot be confirmed by independent sources.

¹ On 3 March, the Government attacked three Fur villages near Jebel Marra. At that time the SLM had also accused the Government of using toxic gases.

5. Civilian Monitoring and Protection Team

Negotiations between the Government and the SPLM/A in March 2002 resulted in the signing of an Agreement to Protect Civilians from Military Attack. This Agreement provided for a verification team to monitor the compliance of the Parties (Government of Sudan and SPLM/A) in meeting their obligations and commitments in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement. A verification team known as the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT) was established in September 2002. To date, CPMT has not investigated any incidents in Darfur as there was no evidence of SPLM/A involvement in the Darfur conflict. Recently, however, the Deputy Head of Security of the Government provided CPMT with documentation allegedly proving SPLA's involvement in Darfur. Based on this documentation, CPMT has recently requested both SPLM/A and the Government to confirm the involvement of the SPLM/A in the conflict. No reply has yet been received from the Government, but the SPLM/A has indicated that it opposes investigations in Darfur by CPMT.