



DO NOT STAND IDLY BY

QUARTERLY UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN DARFUR September 24, 2007

UN-AU Hybrid Force:

On July 31, 2007, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1769, authorizing a United Nations – African Union hybrid force 26,000 peacekeepers. The mission, called UNAMID (United Nations African Union Mission In Darfur) will absorb the current AU force of 7000. All told, the force will have up to 19,555 military personnel, including 360 military observers and liaison officers, a civilian component including up to 3,772 international police and 19 special police units with up to 2,660 officers.

UNAMID has a Chapter VII mandate, allowing it to use force to protect itself, humanitarian workers and civilians. Stronger language that would have allowed the use of force to confiscate arms, and threatened sanctions if Khartoum obstructed implementation of the resolution, was removed from the original resolution in large part because of pressure from China. The resolution, however, passed the vote as China retained the Presidency of the Security Council.

Khartoum has accepted the UN-AU hybrid force in principle, but has insisted that all troops be African in nature. UN and AU officials have recently stated that while they have enough troops to begin deployment, they do not yet have adequate capacity in logistics, equipment and training. Support in this arena must come from Western countries, which have not as of yet met their pledges or pledged adequately. Full deployment is not expected until 2008 at the earliest.

Peace Negotiations:

Peacekeepers are only effective if they have peace to keep. Ahead of UNAMID deployment, therefore, AU and UN representatives have undergone a process of shuttle diplomacy in an effort to arrange peace negotiations between fractious rebel groups and the Sudanese government.

In early August, representatives from several of the more than a dozen rebel factions met in Arusha, Tanzania, in an attempt to create a consolidated position from which to negotiate with the government of Sudan. While those in attendance did manage to reach a compromise platform, in recent weeks rebel unity has met with setbacks. Significantly, Abdel Wahid Nur, the original founder of the now fragmented SLA, has consistently refused to attend talks, insisting that Sudan must implement a full ceasefire and provide security for civilians as a precondition for negotiations.

Peace negotiations between the rebels and the government of Sudan are now scheduled to take place in Libya on October 27, 2007. While the government of Sudan has purportedly offered a ceasefire ahead of the talks, rebel groups and civilians remain skeptical. Countless ceasefires offered by Sudan have been repeatedly violated.

Is Darfur “Still a Genocide?”

The most recent debate in the media has been one about whether or not the conflict in Darfur should still be considered a “genocide.” A recent article in the *LA Times* (“Death Rate Declines in Darfur”) argued that the crisis in Darfur – though certainly warranting world-wide attention – no longer deserved the moniker “genocide.” Direct attacks have indeed decreased significantly, and the Sudanese government is no longer focusing on air attacks in support of the Janjaweed. Alex de Waal, Sudan historian and scholar of the Darfur conflict, also recently likened Darfur less to Rwanda and more to Somalia – a situation of total chaos, under which many people suffer and a humanitarian crisis exists, but no longer one of orchestrated genocide by the Sudanese government.

Death rates have in fact been declining in recent months, in part because direct attacks on villages have subsided. This is likely due to three main factors: first, that large proportions of the villages in Darfur have already

been destroyed, and there are simply less villages to attack. Those villages that remain are often flooded with internally displaced populations (IDPs), swelling their populations to tens, and sometimes hundreds of thousands. These "villages," now large camp complexes, are harder to attack, particularly when there is a presence by relief workers and AU troops. Second, the rebel groups have become more and more splintered, leading to less direct confrontation – and therefore less direct retaliation on villages – by government troops and Janjaweed. Third, direct attacks may be diminishing simply because the world community has been watching. The Sudanese government has not been able to get away with as many direct attacks as often as they once were. In the early days of the genocide, the Sudanese government attacked full force, knowing the impotence of the international community. With the world watching, they feel they can do so with much less impunity.

A second reason that the death rate has declined is that flight has increased. Refugee flows are increasing; in fact, a recent UN report measured 170,000 new refugees since January 2007 – 90,000 just between April and June 2007. This tells us that word about what the Janjaweed are capable of has spread – civilians now flee at the first sign of attack or invasion, instead of waiting to see if they can save their homes, their animals, or their families. Indeed, there are now 4.2-4.7 million conflict-affected people in Darfur alone (about 2.5 million of which are IDPs).

With deaths declining, why do we still call what is happening in Darfur a genocide? Because the definition of genocide has little to do with numbers, and everything to do with intent. Though the death rate may be declining, we can still show that the government of Sudan has acted with intent to eliminate a very specific group of people – black African farmers from Darfur. The government has simply changed its tactics, altered the method by which they commit murder.

Instead of direct attacks, the government of Sudan has mounted a campaign of genocide by attrition. They are doing so in large part by impeding humanitarian aid – changing or revoking visa requirements for humanitarian aid workers at the last minute, allowing a culture of impunity to flourish among Janjaweed and other bandits along aid distribution routes, and, recently, expelling humanitarian workers or heads of humanitarian organizations. In recent weeks, the chief of project for CARE, one of the largest relief organizations working in Darfur, was expelled from Sudan. Since the beginning of 2007, the UN has reported 67 humanitarian vehicles hijacked, an increase of 65% since last year. Just between April and June 2007, four humanitarian aid workers were killed, 15 were physically assaulted, and two NGO clinics and one NGO center in an IDP camp were entirely or partially destroyed by arson.

This attack on humanitarian workers creates a situation in which hundreds of thousands who require humanitarian aid cannot receive it in time, or at all. Deaths from disease, starvation and malnutrition are slower than those from direct attacks, so the overall death rate declines, but they are deaths nonetheless, and they are a direct result of the policy of extermination adhered to by the government of Sudan. Just as a large proportion of those that perished in the Holocaust did not, in fact, meet their fate in the gas chambers, but instead died from starvation or illness in the ghettos and the camps are marked as victims of the genocide against the Jews, so too are those currently perishing in the refugee and IDP camps victims of the Darfur genocide. The intent remains to eliminate the population; only the tactics have changed.

While Alex de Waal's contention that the situation in Darfur is chaos, not genocide, that chaos is carefully orchestrated by the government of Sudan. Rebel groups are now pitted against each other as well as against the government of Sudan, while former Janjaweed militia members change sides frequently as they become disenchanted with the empty promises of land and power originally made by Khartoum. The chaos and internecine fighting does not allow the rebels and civil society movements in Darfur to consolidate their negotiating position. If the rebels and other stakeholders cannot negotiate from a strong platform, a weak and unsustainable peace may be the only agreement to result from the October 27 talks. A weak agreement would allow Sudan to continue its current policy of repression.

To make matters worse, reports have surfaced that the Sudanese government has begun to solidify its position by granting citizenship to those migrant Arabs from Chad and other countries to the west of Sudan that enter Darfur. The government has allowed these people to settle in villages once populated by black African farmers, thereby creating facts on the ground that threaten to permanently alter Darfur's demography.