



National Human Rights Monitors Organisation

Human Rights Update: September 2017 – February 2018

The absence of aerial bombardments and ground fighting has brought relief to the people of South Kordofan and Blue Nile but incidents of cattle looting by armed militias continue in the midst of serious drought, malnutrition and hunger.

NHRMO has been monitoring human rights violations committed against the civilian population in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile since the current conflict began in 2011.

Apart from the casualties of the fighting in Blue Nile state in February 2018, the information in this report provides strong evidence that civilians and their property are being directly and deliberately targeted by the Sudanese government and/or its allied militias as most of the attacks referred to were carried out against clearly identifiable and unarmed civilians.

This update covers the period September 2017 to March 2018 for both Southern Kordofan (SK) and Blue Nile (BN) states of Sudan.

For 21 months now, since mid-2016, there has been a ceasefire in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. This was first declared by Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir and then subsequently extended several times. The latest unilateral ceasefires, cessation of hostilities or extensions of these by both the Sudanese government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army – North (SPLM/A-N) are as follows:

- On 4 January 2018, Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir issued [a decree extending the ceasefire](#) again for three more months, beginning on 1 February 2018.
- On 31 January 2018, Lt. Gen. Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu of SPLM/A-N, announced an extension of SPLM/A-N's [unilateral ceasefire](#) in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states for four more months from 1 February to 31 May 2018. (His faction of the SPLM/A-N had declared a unilateral six months' ceasefire in areas under its control from 31 July 2017 to 31 January 2018).
- On 3 March 2018, the SPLM/A-N faction of Lt. Gen. Malik Agar declared a [unilateral cessation of hostilities](#) in Blue Nile with the faction led by Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu "from Saturday March 3 onward." (The two factions have had several armed clashes in BN since 2017).

The main result of the ceasefires during the period under review is the absence of aerial bombardments by the Sudan Air Force (SAF), a phenomenon which had become synonymous with the war since it started in 2011. Ground attacks by Sudan government forces involving mass movement of troops appear to have also ceased, at least temporarily. Due to the suspension of bombing and massive ground attacks, the situation has been generally calmer, particularly in SK, but with incidents of looting of livestock (i.e. cattle, goats, sheep) by armed militias allied to the government of Sudan. Abductions by the same militias have also been common prior to the period under review. Looting of livestock and abductions amount to ceasefire violations, trigger internal displacements of people and scare

communities away from their agricultural fields, thus causing food insecurity and undermining people's livelihoods.

Outside the SPLM/A-N controlled area in BN, the state has also experienced food insecurity and malnutrition as a result of the persistent drought. Indeed, due to the shortage of food in SPLM/A-N controlled areas many civilians have been moving to government controlled areas where they are assured of something to eat in order to survive.

However, there are no comprehensive nutritional statistics since SK and BN are officially blocked from humanitarian access by the government of Sudan. Humanitarian access would provide a conducive environment for fully fledged nutritional assessments as a first step in generating comprehensive and reliable nutrition statistics. In February 2018, NHRMO published a report on [civilian perspectives](#) regarding humanitarian access.

In SK, apart from the unsettling incidents of cattle looting by government supported militias, the communities continued to enjoy a calmer and more stable life on a day to day basis during the period. In BN, there has been intermittent fighting between two factions of SPLM/A-N since 2017 and this is reported on briefly in the BN section of this update.

However, since the drought and food insecurity have seriously affected both areas, in the short term, the food security situation could improve if the government of Sudan allowed unhindered humanitarian access. Short of that, the only hope lies in a good rainy season in May that would enable people to plant crops with the expectation of a harvest in August.

SOUTHERN KORDOFAN STATE

Of the five incidents recorded in SK, there were three cattle looting attacks resulting in the theft of 89 cows, an incident of exploded anti-personnel mine and another of suspected murder where three people were killed. As of now, there are no indications that the murders can be attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) or its allied militias. Therefore, these cannot be listed as ceasefire violations until there is verification.

September 2017

Delami County

- On 7 September 2017, at 1.00am, residents in Tamau village, Aberi Payam, heard the sound of an explosion coming from the direction of their farms. At sunrise, they went to check and found that a landmine had detonated and killed a lion. There was a small crater and some metal fragments at the site and all that remained of the lion were its paws and some blood. A local community "expert" on landmines was called and he confirmed that this was an anti-personnel landmine.

October 2017

- There were no incidents of human rights violations recorded by our monitors in October 2017.

November 2017

- On 18 November 2017, at 1.30am, in Kumbur village, Nyukur Payam, armed men of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), looted 27 cows from a cattle camp. There were 12 attackers riding on six camels and armed with Kalashnikov rifles and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), among other weapons. The owners of the cows were sleeping but their neighbours saw the attackers and tried to stop them. The PDF shot at them but no one sustained injuries.

December 2017

- On 13 December 2017, at night, 13 cows were looted from Hallobi village, Kumbur Payam, by three armed PDF men riding on camels. The looters headed for Kalogi area which is controlled by SAF.

January 2018

- There were no incidents of human rights violations recorded by our monitors in January 2018.

February 2018

Heiban County

- On 5 February 2018, at midnight, about 49 cows were looted from Larro village, Kumbur Payam. They were taken east in the direction of Talodi town which is controlled by SAF. No indication was available as to the identity of the looters. The cows belonged to two households and this was a setback to them in terms of their livelihood. They reported the incident to Kumbur police who promised to investigate but no details are available yet.
- On 10 February 2018, one person in military uniform and two civilians were found dead in the bush of Kalkada village. The exact identity of the three people is not yet available but it seems they were killed and their bodies dumped there. *(This incident has not been captured in the statistics due to the lack of clarity on the cause and circumstances of the deaths).*

BLUE NILE STATE

Our monitors did not pick up any incidents of cattle looting in BN during the period. However, according to reports, “[dozens of people were killed](#) and wounded in bloody battles between the two factions of the SPLM/A-N, respectively led by Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu and Malik Agar” in February 2018. The fighting also reportedly led to the “[displacement of about 9,000](#) people to the Wadaka area in El Kurmuk locality”, close to the border with South Sudan.

Since 2017, the displacement and deaths on both SPLM/A-N sides in Blue Nile state, as well loss of civilian lives and property, have generated heightened concern among a population which had begun to settle down, albeit temporarily, due to the suspension of aerial bombardments by SAF. By the end of January 2018, [one source](#) put the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in BN at 36,000 and those who have fled the country at 300,000.

Between 11 and 15 March 2018, a number of civil society and humanitarian organisations including NHRMO conducted a joint humanitarian assessment mission in Wadaka Payam, El Kurmuk County. This was aimed at investigating the humanitarian situation of IDPs affected by the internal conflict between SPLM/A-N factions in western Wadaka Payam. The findings indicated that the following villages were affected by the conflict: Tunfona, Alsama-Aradeba, Marmaton, Goz-Bagar, Goz-Aljamamat, Patig, Goz Adam Abdulati, Goz-Arab, Goz-Kordalla, Sharsharo and Tokush. The assessment also confirmed a massive population movement of IDPs out of these areas as the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate due to insecurity and lack of basic humanitarian services. Most of the IDPs have “settled” in Gesis, Wadaka-Aljebel, Jebel-Lebo, Jebel-Jero, Goz-Abu-rassin, Balila-centre and Sammari villages but they lack basic humanitarian services including shelter and most of them were living under trees. Their needs include food, medical care, water, education, clothing and basic security. Children, the elderly and pregnant women were the most vulnerable IDP groups as a result of hunger, malnutrition and disease. A number of women delivered their babies in the bush without basic maternity services and antenatal care. The IDPs also lacked potable water and are using unprotected boreholes, wells and surface water. The government of Sudan continues to block humanitarian access to both SK and BN.

According to the assessment, a total of 12,809 IDPs from 1,983 households were directly affected by the conflict. Their properties, which were destroyed or lost in the BN conflict, included houses, sorghum stores, farms and livestock. A total of 3,151 head of livestock were lost, 78 shops destroyed, 86 farmlands totally burnt, 4,323 houses burned down, 12 boreholes destroyed, 2,000 sorghum stores

