



**National Human
Rights Monitors
Organization**

Civilians' views in the Nuba Mountains about the Humanitarian Access

This document is based on the reports received from human rights monitors in different counties in Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan state, Sudan, which indicate that the civilians in the areas controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army–North (SPLM/A–N) are suffering from lack of food, shelter, medicine and water, as well as basic social services like health care and education, among other needs. As the warring parties sit down to discuss peace, access for humanitarian services has been one of the sticking blocks in the past, meanwhile the people's suffering has been getting worse. Between August and November 2017, NHRMO spoke to 127 people in SPLM/A-N controlled areas of Southern Kordofan. This briefing is an attempt to ensure their voices are a part of this important conversation.

Background

The Nuba Mountains, like other regions in Sudan, continue to suffer from an ongoing armed conflict which began between the central government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in 1983. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed in 2005 by the two fighting parties, marking the end of one of the longest civil wars in the world.

Unfortunately, the government of Sudan (GoS) failed to implement and honour the CPA fully, which resulted in the creation of the SPLM/A-N which spearheaded the resistance of the people of Southern Kordofan against an attack on the Nuba people on 6 June 2011 and three months later spread into Blue Nile state. The fighting in Nuba Mountains was a very clear violation of the CPA, but was largely ignored by the international community because all eyes were focused on ensuring the separation of South Sudan.



Cluster bomb dropped by Sudan government plane in Umdorein County, June 2015 ©NHRMO

Since 6 June 2011, civilians in the Nuba Mountains region have been suffering extreme conditions. The government of Sudan had, until a ceasefire was declared in June 2016, been bombing, using cluster and barrel bombs and shelling civilian settlements in an indiscriminate way and on an unprecedented scale. Between June 2011 and May 2017, NHRMO documents that over 300 civilians have been killed and over 700 injured, though the true number is likely to be much higher.¹

¹ NHRMO has been documenting the number of attacks against the civilian population of the two areas and the resulting deaths and injuries since 2011 and these monthly reports can be accessed here http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html

The bombs destroyed many of the existing humanitarian facilities including hospitals and schools.



Aftermath of bombing of Tadugli medical clinic – 9 July 2013 © NHRMO

Bomb damage caused to the MSF hospital in Farandalla, Southern Kordofan – 16 June 2014 © NHRMO



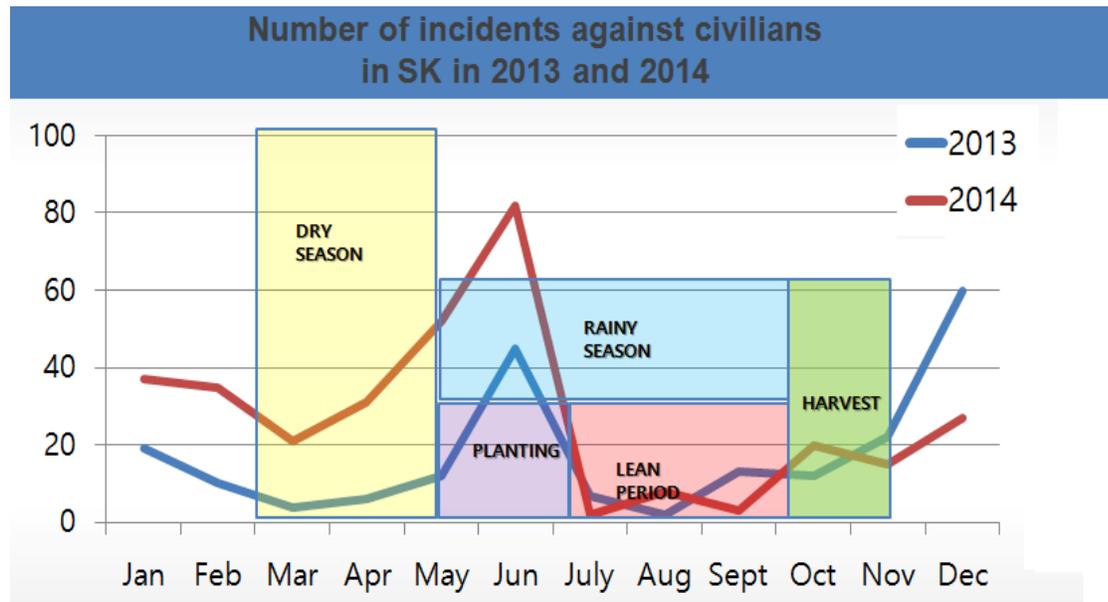
The classroom of Uruma Model Primary School, Delami County, - February 2014 © NHRMO



Bombed primary school – March 2016 © NHRMO



The data collected by NHRMO also suggests that these bombing attacks intensified to coincide with planting and harvesting seasons, preventing people from going into the field thus further undermining their resilience.



In addition, no regional or international organisations have been granted access by the GoS to provide lifesaving humanitarian aid to the civilians in SPLM/A–N controlled areas and the situation has been dire for a long time.² Through such government policies, many civilians have lost their lives and many ran to refugee camps in South Sudan, which currently hosts about 390,000 refugees from the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Maban, Yida, Ajuong Thok and Pamir camps, while others surrendered to the government-controlled areas for survival.

Also, the government of Sudan has rejected the [tripartite agreement](#) proposed by the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the United Nations (UN) on humanitarian assistance to war affected civilians in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile states. This agreement was accepted by the SPLM/A-N which entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the other parties based on the "Joint AU/LAS/UN proposal for access to provide and deliver humanitarian assistance to war-affected civilians in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States", and in accordance with the African Union Peace and Security Council [Communique of 24 April 2012](#) and United Nations Security Council [Resolution 2046](#) of 2 May 2012.

As a result of growing international pressure, in November 2016, GoS agreed to allow humanitarian access to the war affected areas under one condition - that all aid and assistance should come from Khartoum. This was unacceptable to the SPLM/A-N, who expressed concerns as a result of previous experiences when Khartoum had withheld aid in an arbitrary manner, and insisted that they also be allowed to receive aid via Ethiopia, which Khartoum refused. This brought about a stalemate and aid and assistance are still not allowed by GoS in the two areas due to this ongoing disagreement on how the access should be facilitated.

Civilian Perspectives on the Humanitarians Access

More than 91% of the interviewees stated that they do not trust the GoS and they do not want Sudan to control the entire process of the humanitarian access, as it was described by a civilian from Delami County,

² The Coordination Unit produced monthly reports on the humanitarian situation on the ground and these can also be read at http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html

Nuba Mountains, “to avoid a Darfur scenario” where the control and management of humanitarian assistance is in the hands of the government and the aid delivery has been utilised for political gain with many humanitarian organisations also being kicked out.

On the other hand, there were a few people (less than 10%) who do not care about the route taken by the humanitarian aid as long as the people are assisted. This latter group stated that they are “so tired of war and want peace immediately.”

The perspectives of civilians can be summarised in the following three points:

- it is widely believed that the GoS should not have full control of facilitating humanitarian aid;
- by depriving civilians of basic humanitarian services, the GoS is using food as a weapon of war; and
- the people of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile state are entitled to have human rights equal to any other person, based on international standards.

Civilians commonly expressed distrust toward the Sudanese government. As stated by a 35 year old man interviewed in Delami County, Southern Kordofan: “My view regarding the humanitarian access to the Nuba Mountains region is [that it is] blocked by the Sudan government...We need 80% to come from East African countries and 20% from the government side.” This statement is in reference to the proposal by the SPLM/A-N that 80% of humanitarian aid should come from Khartoum, and the other 20% from Ethiopia. Civilians strongly believe that the greater portion of humanitarian assistance should come from external routes supported by the international community.

While the Sudanese government is obliged to provide humanitarian support for its citizens in the two contested regions, it is actually doing the opposite and many see it as another weapon of war used against them by the Sudanese government. As expressed by a 39 year old woman residing in Delami County, “[the] Khartoum regime has been denying humanitarian access to the affected population in Nuba Mountain since 2011, using it as weapon of war always.”

These testimonies were further supported by civilians discussing the helplessness they feel in response to the atrocities committed against them by their own government. As said by a woman from Delami County: “We, as civilians, have been suffering but we do not have any influence on the Sudan government to enable humanitarian aid to be delivered to us...We wish the international audience and the African Union could look at our issue of delivering the humanitarian aid by any Eastern African country but not Sudan.”



“We were farmers. We could provide for ourselves... When this war started we lost everything.”

Refugee from Blue Nile, Yusuf Batil camp South Sudan, May 2016

Generally, women in the Nuba Mountains felt that they are the most vulnerable group. This is indicated by their inability to safely provide for their families. It was expressed by a woman as “we are the most

affected group from the delay of humanitarian access...our children are always crying because of [the] lack of food.”

It was found that religious leaders collectively felt that people in the Nuba Mountains are treated as less human and do not have equal rights as others. An Imam shared the indiscriminate way civilians are targeted: “They don’t differentiate civilians from military, only attack them all by Antonov [bomber plane] without mercy not even [toward] children and women.” A Christian pastor mirrored this sentiment. He stated, “There are many trials for the SPLM/A-N to open ways for the NGOs to enter into the Nuba Mountains, but every time we hear that there are rejections and it is not allowed.”

Civilian authorities made a call to action that aid is a right for the Nuba people and should not be compromised. It was stated, “[W]e request that humanitarian aid reach our people which is the right for any one in need. We are not separated from this world. So, it’s very important for the international community to convince both warring parties to allow the humanitarian assistance to reach the ordinary people in the region.”

Conclusion

The humanitarian situation is dire, and therefore the UN and AU and all international actors must intervene to save the lives of the civilians in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. Technically President, al-Bashir does not represent the people who are living in the areas under the control of SPLM/A – N because none were given the opportunity to participate in the 2015 Sudanese General Elections. Instead the leaders of SPLM/A–N are the representatives of the people of the two areas, which the international and regional community should bear in mind when discussing anything related to those people in the two areas who are living within SPLM/A–N territories. It is imperative that all measures are taken to allow humanitarian access into the two areas.

Recommendations

To the UN:

- put more pressure on both warring parties to make this happen and achieve sustainable peace in Sudan;
- to strongly encourage both parties to prioritise the needs of the people over political gains to ensure access of humanitarian organisations to the two areas.

To the AU:

- should take its responsibility to save lives of millions of Africans citizens in the two areas and put more pressure on both warring parties to allow humanitarian access immediately and
- work very hard to push for ending the war in two areas and Sudan in general;

To the USA administration:

- American foreign policy for Sudan should be reconsidered to be reflective of the civilian needs in the two contested areas, including the American proposal for humanitarian access, as opposed to maintaining the control of the central government over the whole process.
- Also, they should work collaboratively with the regional actors in order to achieve just peace;

To GoS and SPLM/A–N:

- to allow aid to reach the two areas immediately and not to use it for political purposes, let the voice of civilians be heard.
- to seriously work very hard to achieve sustainable peace in the country.