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Darfur: Eyewitness Names 70 Villages Destroyed in Past Three Months

There is a wealth of testimony and reporting extant on Darfur, but we are publishing this latest Aegis interview with a Darfur African survivor as it powerfully conveys the ongoing attacks in Darfur, and the inability of the AU, with their current limited capacity, to respond to the crisis.

Given that attacks are happening over the border in Chad now, Aegis strongly urges the international community to mobilize a UN protection force to Chad. This will not violate the sovereignty of Sudan, but will help to stabilize the region.

It should come with a threat to Sudan that if these genocidal operations continue, the protection of civilians will take priority over its sovereignty. The UN Security Council should immediately impose a No-Fly Zone and stop the Antonov bombers and helicopter gunships from flying.

It is notable that the attacks described below continued unabated regardless of the visits to Sudan by politicians and diplomats during the same period – among them, Jedayi Frazer, US Assistant Secretary of State; Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development; Phillipe Douste Blazy, French Foreign Minister; Jan Egeland, UN Humanitarian Coordinator; and most recently David Cameron, Conservative Party Leader.

Osman Ishak (not his real name) 27 Nov 2006

I was born in North Darfur in 1965, but moved to South Darfur in 1980, where I worked as a primary school teacher. On 24 August 2006, Government and Janjaweed forces attacked my village. They used heavy guns, light guns and Antonovs. Eight members of my family were killed, including four of my brothers and my seven-year-old son. We fled to the forest, and stayed there for two months. Then we went to Boro city, South Darfur. My wife and my other four children are there, still suffering. Not enough food or proper clothing. From Boro I traveled to Raja; from Raja to Wau. When I arrived in Wau, I found some people from Darfur there, and other people from the south who helped me to get to Khartoum – by bicycle. I arrived in Khartoum four days ago (Thursday 23 Nov).

Attacks began on 24th August. And from then, continuous ground attacks supported by Antonovs. No helicopters, just Antonovs. Janjaweed and troops have been used to attack more than 100 villages in the area in the past three months, 70 of which I can name. At

least seven were destroyed in the past two weeks. Even the day before yesterday, another person came from that place to Khartoum and confirmed that the war continues.

There are no AU forces in this area. There were rebels in the area, but didn't belong to them. We were a group of refugees. We called the AU to come to collect the wounded and injured. They failed to come. We called the AU force, and sent one man to represent us. His name was Sadiq. He tried to contact them, and they promised to come to us. They didn't come. The second time they promised to come, they didn't. The third time they didn't come, the Janjaweed came to kill us. We made our first contact with the AU on 24 August. Sometimes even in one day, we tried to contact the AU more than once. Sometimes they hadn't got oil, and sometimes the weather wasn't good. There were no aid organizations in the area three months ago, and there are still none. But in Boro city, we found some organisations helping us – the UN, the World Food Programme, the Red Cross.

These are the names of the 70 villages that I can recall which have seen attacked:

Legediba
Nabagaia
Tal Haia
Joachin
Khartum Bileil
Amut Al Ahdar
Sadat Ali
Hilah Zachariya
Eir Deba
Hileh Tama
Hileh Miseria
Hileh Saboun
Korteish
Omdurmu
Omdurnia
Omshileli
Omkurkur
Jokjok
Rongait
Rongai
Hileh tamatim
Hileh Rumeida
Hileh Abu Arbain
Hileh Garadaia
Hileh Taba
Hileh Tiba
Hileh Borgo
Orongi Gureida
Hileh Tahir Bakhat

Hileh Jorghana
Hileh Abu Samanin
Habat
Harada
Tabaldie
Andreine
Umkhair
Baha Bilajeri
Khair Wajit
Amdrosa
Am darana
Hileh Musa Badawi
Nur Alhuda
Sharamut
Amanallah
Hileh Foki'adam
Ilebo
Hileh Abu Suriya
Hileh Lil
Hilah Jamin
Hileh Jadida
Hileh Ruitba
Hileh Sajihala
Nurbo
Hileh Foghiyahya
Karal
Sabakilo
Baris
Kuriya
Gilezan
Hilah Bil Marfayeen
Omar teina
Omaraiya
Hileh Fajer
Bil Shiger
Hileh Bashar
Umkhairain
Himeida
Hilah Omar
Hileh Moughi
Hileh Juma Hussein

More than 70 villages have been destroyed, but these are in my memory. More than 100 villages have been destroyed, but these are the names I remember. I have seen the fires of all 70 villages. 70 I have seen with my eyes, and even more have heard about. All of them are close, the furthest one is like a day's travel. When one village was destroyed,

people from that place would come to us. And some were set fire together, and people moved.

I used to live there, I used to teach there, I know the whole geography of the area. As refugees came together, we worked out what villages had been destroyed. I know some people are still there, 7,000 people in Rodom, a closed place with no aid organizations there. 3,000 in Abu Shalal, no aid agencies there. 2,000 in Wada Fat. All these places are closed, no organizations there yet.

From Nyala to Rodom is 210 miles. Most are within around the same distance from Nyala. Abu Dafaf, another village destroyed, is further away than the rest – 250-260 miles from Nyala. I was deputy of the refugees there whose villages were destroyed, so I spoke to survivors from all those villages.

400 refugees were with me in the forest, every day their numbers were increasing. And those who we left in Radom, came separately. Those people, they are controlled by Government and Janjaweed, there is no way to get a chance to move from those places.

These people are suffering very much, and they wanted someone to represent them and speak on behalf of them. So from the time I arrived in Boro, I started to speak on behalf of them.

Many people died in the attacks. At least 2000 people killed. There are more than 1000 children among the refugees, between the ages of five and ten, who have lost their parents or who do not know if their parents are alive or dead.

Many women have been raped during these attacks. The Janjaweed all kill and rape as many as possible. I can't give a specific number for those raped, but many. I found one lady, thirty men raped her. I found her nearly dead. This was on 3 August, near Lil.

As soon as we arrived in Boro city, we told all the aid organisations, but no action was taken because the area is not safe for people to cross it. But they provided some food for those who arrived in Boro city.

Organisations and countries with more power can try to force the Sudanese Government to allow food and clothes to be provided for those who survived the war. Any black who is living there, the Government and Janjaweed think they support the rebels.

If I could say one thing to Mr. Blair: You have got a democratic country and enough power. What is happening is terrible. We need action as soon as possible, if you can help us. People are very tired, physically and mentally. We are in the news sometimes, and people talk about us, but there is no action. No one comes, and the situation is getting worse and worse and worse. Please, please come and help us.

I am scared to talk, but the house I'm in, no-one can know it now.

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