


## **Engineered Famine: Khartoum's Weapon of Genocidal Mass Destruction, February 23, 2005**

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Catastrophic food shortfalls in Darfur can no longer be avoided

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February 23, 2005

If there is a voice of conscience within the UN, a voice that refuses to allow Darfur's terrible truths to remain unsaid, it belongs to Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs. It was Egeland who first sounded the alarm concerning the scale of Darfur's humanitarian crisis over a year ago, declaring in a radio interview that Darfur had already become the world's greatest humanitarian crisis ("The World," BBC/Public Radio International, December 18, 2003). It was Egeland who, on the basis of his own research and travel to Darfur, dared to say that what was occurring in Darfur was "ethnic cleansing" (Reuters, April 4, 2004), even as UN Secretary-General Kofi would maintain more than two months later that he'd seen nothing to convince him that what was occurring in Darfur was either genocide or "ethnic cleansing." It was Egeland who in April 2004 also appropriately described Khartoum's military actions as "scorched-earth tactics" directed against the non-Arab/African tribal populations of Darfur.

Now Egeland has again sounded the alarm and offered the most ominous of warnings:

"Since [the world belatedly awoke to the Darfur crisis] the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has doubled to between 1.8 million and 1.9 million 'and it's growing by the day.' The number of IDPs and the many hundreds of thousands of others now outside of the camps who are in desperate need of assistance is bound to increase, he warned, adding: 'Some are predicting 3 million, some are predicting 4 million, some are predicting more than that, of people in desperate need of life-saving assistance as we approach the hunger gap in mid-year...whose lives will be at stake.'" (UN News Center [New York], February 18, 2005)

These numbers represent a crisis that will overwhelm currently available humanitarian resources in this remote and extremely difficult theater of operations (see section below on food supplies and logistics, market collapse, and production shortfalls). A critical lack of international funding, completely unacceptable levels of insecurity for humanitarian operations, and growing politicization of the Darfur crisis also work against the achievement of adequate humanitarian resources, deployment, and reach. And, as Egeland insists, still the numbers continue to grow:

"Some are predicting 3 million, some are predicting 4 million, some are predicting more than that, of people in desperate need of life-saving assistance as we approach the hunger gap in mid-year...whose lives will be at stake."

For context, we should recall that the UN World Food Program reached 1.2 million needy recipients in January 2005---a decline of 300,000 from December 2004. Instead of increasing food deliveries, humanitarian operations saw a 20% decline. Even as overall agricultural production remains essentially paralyzed because of insecurity, and food reserves continue to fall, 300,000 fewer people received food last month, and the decline may continue in the current month.

Internal World Food Program documents now estimate---and on the basis of unreasonably optimistic assumptions about the integrity of food markets in Darfur---that 2.8 million people will be in need of food assistance during the coming "hunger gap"---the period of time between spring/early summer planting

and fall harvest. This period also largely coincides with the rainy season that paralyzes transport for much of Darfur, cutting off large parts of the population, as was the case during the rainy season of last year. A more realistic assessment of the food crisis suggests that Egeland is right to offer the numbers he does: between 3 million and 4 million people will be affected by Khartoum's engineered famine. Hundreds of thousands of people will starve to death.

Previous warnings of famine have already come from the US Agency for International Development and the UN's respected Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO):

"All the indicators are there for a famine,' says Marc Bellemans, the Sudan emergency coordinator for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. In a report to fellow UN agencies late last year, the FAO warned 'a humanitarian crisis of unseen proportions is unfolding in the Darfur region.'" (The Wall Street Journal [Dateline: Fur Baranga, Darfur] February 7, 2005)

This famine warning was also given explicit and increased urgency by Egeland:

"While relief workers were able to prevent the massive famine that had been predicted for the area a year ago, 'now it is time to say we may not perhaps be able to do so in the coming months if the situation keeps on deteriorating as it has,' Egeland told a news conference." (Reuters, February 18, 2005)

And though full-scale famine has heretofore been averted, areas in rural Darfur are now experiencing famine or famine-like conditions. Moreover, overall mortality has still been massive during the past two years of extremely violent conflict and displacement: data currently available from humanitarian, UN, and human rights reports strongly suggest that more than 350,000 people have already perished (see most recent mortality assessment by this writer: "Darfur Humanitarian Update," February 10, 2005 at: <http://www.sudanreeves.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=37&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>).

[Significantly, there is no evidence that the UN World Health Organization (WHO) has succeeded in obtaining access to Darfur for its mortality epidemiologists, an effort first reported over two weeks ago by the Washington Post:

"The World Health Organization has been in tense negotiations with Sudan for about a month over allowing a team of international epidemiologists to conduct a study of mortality in Darfur. A UN official familiar with the discussions said Khartoum has so far refused to grant visas to the agency's specialists because Sudan is 'just terrified' that a new mortality study will heighten international criticism of the government." (The Washington Post, February 8, 2005)

On the contrary, there are strong indications that even if the WHO gains access, its work will be fundamentally compromised by Khartoum (see below).]

The food crisis in Darfur is of course in many ways a security crisis, a fact highlighted repeatedly by Egeland, even as he made insistently clear the woeful inadequacy of the present African Union force:

"Eight workers have been killed, our helicopters have been shot at, our trucks are being looted there--- we are paralyzed,' Mr. Egeland added." (UN News Center [New York], February 18, 2005)

"Egeland criticized world leaders for leaving aid workers to apply a 'bandaid' instead of taking political action to resolve the conflict. 'You cannot have this kind of situation and put in 10,000 unarmed men and women with blankets and foodstuffs and field hospitals and say, 'You stop this war.' We cannot. Others have to help us,' Egeland said."

"We're front row witnesses to more massacres. We're front-row witnesses to more displacements. We

are front row witnesses to massive misery and suffering of Darfur and we shouldn't be,' [Egeland] said. 'The armed men in militias are getting away with murder of women and children and it is still happening. Those who direct the militias, these forces are also getting away with murder. It's impunity what we have seen taking place in Darfur,' he said." (Associated Press, February 19, 2005)

Of course the "armed men in militias getting away with murder of women and children" are the Janjaweed, Khartoum's savage military proxies and the unconstrained instrument of violent, ethnically-targeted human destruction. Though the insurgency movements are culpable on many counts, especially in impeding humanitarian efforts, and also give evidence of both political and military fracturing, it is important to bear in mind the conclusions of both the UN Commission of Inquiry for Darfur and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

"Although attacks by rebel forces have also taken place, the Commission has found no evidence that these are widespread or that they have been systematically targeted against the civilian population. Incidents of rebel attacks are mostly against military targets, police or security forces" (Paragraph 240 of the Report of the International Commission of Inquiry, [Geneva] January 25, 2005)

"My mission received no credible reports of rebel attacks on civilians as such but did receive reports of attacks on police officers." ("Statement to the Security Council on Darfur," Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, September 30, 2004)

If the international community is to take Egeland's urgent and impassioned warning seriously, it must be prepared to provide a massive increase in the size and mandate of forces committed to augmenting the presently deeply inadequate African Union force. Egeland speaks generally of a force perhaps five times greater than that presently deployed: "Maybe we would need five times the number there is now of African Union forces," (Associated Press, February 19, 2005).

But the truth is that this is not so much a considered estimate of the military force necessary for the various security tasks that must be undertaken if humanitarian operations and acutely vulnerable civilian populations are to be protected; rather, it is a desperate plea by Egeland for "the Security Council and world at-large [to] act now to put a robust force on the ground" (UN News Center, February 18, 2005):

"Humanitarian workers are frustrated and angry with the situation. Many of them feel that we are alibis or a substitute for the political action and the security action that the world is not taking,' [Egeland] said." (Reuters, February 18, 2005)

"The basic lesson of earlier crises like Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda is 'that too often the world sends us, the band aid, and the world believes that we keep people alive and then they don't have to take a political and security action. This is wrong and that's why we are really tired of being that kind of a substitute for political and security action,' [Egeland] said." (UN News Center, February 18, 2005)

The balance of this analysis focuses on the interrelated issues of [1] security requirements for Darfur, and [2] current indications of the scale of the food shortages that can be expected over the next nine months to a year.

## SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

The remoteness of a political settlement to the Darfur crisis makes all the more urgent an assessment of what is required in the way of international humanitarian intervention. For there are simply no signs that the African Union-sponsored talks in Abuja, Nigeria will yield any diplomatic progress in the near term, nothing that might diminish the need for very substantial deployment of security forces throughout Darfur---forces far in excess of what the African Union has fielded or is capable of providing.

The inadequacy of AU diplomatic auspices is suggested all too clearly by recent wire reports indicating that a possible resumption of the peace talks has been very badly managed (the previous round of talks collapsed in disarray in December 2004, following Khartoum's initiation of a major military offensive on the very eve of these talks). Associated Press reports from Khartoum:

"Kamal Obeid, secretary of the National Congress [i.e., the National Islamic Front] party's foreign relations committee, said Sudan has received official notification from the African Union and the Nigerian presidency, which is chairing the talks, that [peace talks] will resume this month [February 2005]. 'We actually received an official notification from the parties brokering the talks on the resumption of the negotiations by the end of this month, but no specific date has yet been set,' Obeid said. However, an African Union spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he had not received any indication of a scheduled resumption of talks." (Associated Press [Khartoum], February 21, 2005)

To add to the confusion, Reuters reports that the insurgency movements claim not to have been notified of any resumption in talks:

"The Sudanese government said talks to end violence in Darfur would resume at the end of February, but rebels said they had not been told of the date and would need more time to prepare themselves for any talks. The rebel Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) said a return to talks depended on the government creating a 'conducive atmosphere,' and that the African Union, which is sponsoring the talks, had not given it a date."

"SLM spokesman Adam Ali Shogar said on Sunday the government must within two weeks withdraw from areas it has captured since a much-violated ceasefire was signed and respect a no-fly zone before the rebels would consider a return to talks. 'We have not received any notification from the AU regarding the restarting of the talks,' he said. 'If the government delivers on its pledges and creates a conducive atmosphere then we will return to talks,' he said."

"SLM Chairman Abdel Wahid Mohammed Ahmed Nour said the AU must force the government to implement agreements signed in November on security and humanitarian issues for peace talks to have any meaning. He told Reuters the SLM also needed at least 20 days to prepare for any talks." (Reuters, February 20, 2005)

Given the ease with which Khartoum has forestalled progress in previous rounds of talks, and the growing divisions evident within the both the political and military wings of the two primary insurgency movements (the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army [SLM/A] and Justice and Equality Movement [JEM]), such diplomatic chaos is ominous in the extreme. It is hardly surprising that Khartoum continues to express its unqualified support for the AU as the exclusive diplomatic resource for peace talks, and has worked relentlessly to forestall broader international participation in negotiations.

In the absence of a negotiated settlement, and given the deepening humanitarian crisis that Khartoum has engineered, Egeland is right to insist in his remarks of February 18, 2005 that a security force many times the size of the currently deployed AU force is required.

Such a force must be defined by a comprehensive survey of the specific security requirements generated by the Darfur crisis. While long evident, these requirements have been little discussed at the UN or by international actors well aware of the inadequacies of the AU force. Notably and commendably, many of these are articulated in a new report by Amnesty International ("Sudan: Amnesty International's recommendations on the deployment of a UN peace support operation," AI Index: AFR 54/025/2005; February 21, 2005). Of particular significance is Section 4 of the recommendations: "A strong and unambiguous mandate and sufficient means to protect civilians" (pages 6-7).

But Amnesty doesn't specify all the tasks that must be undertaken; nor does the organization offer any

concrete force proposals. Only very general suggestions are made, and without any clear acknowledgement that virtually all would entail significant infringement on the national sovereignty that Khartoum is already claiming, with considerable support from the Arab League (especially Egypt and Libya), some African states, China, Pakistan, and other nations. Moreover, Amnesty's proposal for an arms embargo that would cut off the flow weapons to the Khartoum regime is clearly politically impossible within the UN Security Council, as both Russia and China have made abundantly clear in public statements.

This lack of specificity on Amnesty's part indirectly highlights the essential political problem facing any humanitarian intervention of the sort that Egeland has called for ("[UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Egeland] urgently called on world leaders Friday to vastly increase the number of troops in Sudan's Darfur region to protect unarmed civilians and humanitarian workers facing a wave of murder, rape and looting" (Associated Press, February 19, 2005). For where are these troops to come from? How many will be needed? How can countries outside Africa enable and work with AU forces to create an effective force? Under what auspices will they be deployed? How will the threat of a Chinese or Russian veto in the UN Security Council be overcome? How will such a force be deployed without UN approval?

Egeland recognizes that answers to these questions are not his to provide, but there is little evidence that others are taking up the planning tasks in effective or forceful fashion.

It must first be said that these troops and security personnel for Darfur must be in addition to the UN peacekeeping operation that will be deployed to southern Sudan in support of the January 9, 2005 peace agreement between Khartoum and the southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. This force, as articulated in the most recent US draft Security Council resolution, is bloated, exorbitantly expensive, and militarily ill-conceived in many respects (see a analysis by this writer [February 17, 2005] of the US proposal at:

<http://www.sudanreeves.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=38&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>). But most consequentially, the US proposal contains nothing that suggests how eventual deployment of such a peace-support operation will directly address extremely urgent security needs in Darfur.

To save the lives that are now acutely at risk, an emergency resolution at the UN must receive immediate consideration. If China and/or Russia block such consideration or veto an eventual resolution, NATO, the European Union, the US and other willing countries (e.g., Australia, New Zealand) must act outside UN auspices. All possible diplomatic, political, economic, and moral leverage should be used to convince the African Union to accept the basic fact of its inability to provide adequate security to the people of Darfur, and the consequent need for broad international assistance.

What are the essential security tasks?

[1] Provision of security to the camps for Internally Displaced Persons, with adequate security perimeters that allow for the collection of firewood, food, and animal fodder;

[2] Securing all humanitarian corridors to and within Darfur, both by means of active patrols and accompanying security details for all convoys requesting protection;

[3] The opening of safe passage routes from rural areas currently beyond the reach of humanitarian operations, thereby allowing the free movement of people who have depleted all food reserves and are preventing by ongoing Janjaweed predations from using their superb foraging skills;

[4] The dismantling of checkpoints on key road arteries, many of which are maintained by bandits and other lawless elements that have emerged from the chaos of two years of violence;

[5] Provision of safe passage and protection to civilians who wish to return to their villages, or the sites of their former villages, in order to resume agriculturally productive lives;

[6] Mechanical disabling or destruction of any military aircraft implicated in violations of international law, in particular attacks on civilian targets;

[7] Cantonment and eventual disarmament of the Janjaweed (per the terms of the heretofore flouted "demand" of UN Security Resolution 1556, July 30, 2004).

These tasks suggest very significant force requirements. Romeo Dallaire, UN force commander in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, has estimated that approximately 44,000 troops would be required for a mission similar in ambition to one defined by these security tasks. The world may choose to ignore actual military requirements in responding to Darfur's massive crisis, and focus instead on what appears politically practicable; this substitution of expediency for the honest assessment of what is required to halt genocide ensures only that many tens of thousands who might be saved will die.

## THE FOOD CRISIS

Even with dramatically increased security in Darfur, the consequences of two years of extreme violence, poor planning by the UN, inadequate international funding, and Khartoum's relentless obstruction of humanitarian responses have created a situation in which there are now massive and insurmountable food shortages. The steady collapse of agricultural production in Darfur, the extreme disruption of markets, and rapidly escalating inflation in food prices all portend extraordinary human mortality during the coming "hunger gap" (May/June to October).

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP) estimate that 2004/2005 gross cereal production (primarily millet and sorghum) will be one half to two-thirds below any of the most recent five year's harvests. And even this very likely understates the severity of the crisis: the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the most substantial presence in rural Darfur, has indicated that net cereal production will be far less than suggested by FAO/WFP figures.

At a minimum, Darfur faces a cereal food gap of 250,000 metric tons (MT), according to UN and non-UN food planners. For a sense of what this figure alone represents, we should bear in mind that humanitarian logisticians estimate that food needs for 1 million people (cereal, pulses, and oil) are approximately 17,000 MT per month. A 250,000 MT shortfall represents the total cereal food consumption of more than a million people for approximately 14 months---without any balancing complement of pulses (leguminous foods) or cooking oil.

From a somewhat different quantitative perspective, early in fiscal year 2005 the US Agency for International Development (US AID) estimated that without a dramatic improvement in security on the ground in Darfur, the region's emergency food needs would reach to 750,000 MT for the current calendar year (2005). US AID evidently now regards even this enormous estimate as low.

The effects of what are now inevitably huge shortfalls in food aid and availability can already be measured in terms of devastating inflation in food prices:

"Sharp food price rises signal worrying grain shortages in many areas in Sudan, already suffering widespread hunger, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday. WFP spokesperson Laura Melo said a near doubling of sorghum prices in the past 12 months indicated the supply of cereals could be even tighter than thought and the number of people possibly at risk of food shortages greater than feared. 'WFP is extremely concerned about a rapid rise in food prices in Sudan,' she said. 'Many more people than we had anticipated could be facing food shortages and the shortages of cereals could be worse than we thought.'" (Reuters, February 22, 2004)

Of particular concern is the very recent spike in food prices:

"The UN's food agency warned Tuesday that there were signs that Sudan was facing a food crisis, following a sharp rise in crop prices in the country in recent weeks. The World Food Programme said the price rises added to shortages caused by failed harvests, poor aid deliveries or violence, especially in the south and east of the country, and the strife-torn western region of Darfur. 'The increase in crop prices in the last weeks has been sudden and significant,' [WFP] spokesman Simon Pluess told journalists." (Agence France-Press, February 22, 2005)

The disruption of food markets, especially smaller food markets, has already been severe, with increasingly strong ripple effects in the urban areas. Moreover, even Darfuri villagers who have not been displaced depend on these markets for the majority of their food, given the collapse in agricultural production. Rising prices will put food beyond the economic reach of these people, creating an even larger population dependent upon humanitarian food distribution. Indeed, a cascade of destructive effects has been set in motion, and only the most urgent humanitarian intervention---both in the provision of security and additional food supplies, transport, and logistics---can mitigate in significant ways the cataclysm of human destruction that is impending.

Rural areas are in fact already giving strong signs of famine conditions, and a recent important analysis from Refugees International reports clear indications of the direction of the food crisis. Assessing Global Acute Malnutrition, Refugees International notes that while rates in camps have improved:

"Outside of camps, however, malnutrition rates may run between 20% and 25%, and wild foods are turning up for sale in markets in North Darfur, an indicator of severe food stress." ("Sudan: Food shortages spreading beyond conflict areas," Refugees International, February 16, 2005)

#### THE NEXUS OF INSECURITY

Ultimately, the threats to civilian life in Darfur are only arbitrarily distinguished as physical insecurity and food insecurity: the two are relentlessly intertwined by virtue of the Khartoum regime's inexorable pursuit of genocidal ambitions. We may see the relationship in the terms articulated by Egeland:

"'We are very afraid of the security of our workers in the field,' [Egeland] said, noting that 'armed men in the militias are getting away with murder of women and children and it is still happening and those who direct these militias are also getting away with murder,' due to massive impunity for what an inquiry commission has called massive war crimes and crimes against humanity." (UN News Center, February 18, 2005)

We may also see the relationship in terms of Khartoum's deliberate obstruction of humanitarian operations, as reported by Kofi Annan to the UN Security Council:

"December and January saw increasing harassment of international nongovernmental organizations by [Khartoum's] local authorities [in Darfur], particularly in South Darfur. In a worrying sign that earlier progress is being rolled back, systematic arrest, false and hostile accusations through the national media outlets, and outright attacks were combined with renewed restrictions on travel permits and visa applications. Almost all NGOs operating South Darfur faced some form of intimidation that delayed and restricted their operations." (Paragraph 21 of the February 4, 2005 Report of the Secretary-General on Sudan Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1556 [2004])

We may also see the relationship between physical insecurity and food insecurity in Khartoum's continuing refusal to restrain its brutal Janjaweed militia allies, and the effects of Janjaweed predations on agricultural production and the ability of Darfuris to forage for food. Though Security Council Resolution

1556 (July 30, 2004) "demands" that Khartoum disarm the Janjaweed and bring its leaders to justice, the regime has exhibited nothing but contempt for this "demand," now issued over half a year ago. Indeed, recent comments from the most notorious Janjaweed leader, Musa Hilal, give a clear picture of Khartoum's relationship to this instrument of human destruction:

"An Arab tribal chief suspected of human rights abuses in Darfur said on Sunday he was doing only what the government told him when he recruited militiamen to help put down an uprising there. Musa Hilal, who tops the [US] State Department's list of Darfur human rights abuse suspects, said Khartoum had entrusted tribal leaders with recruiting young men to join the militias in Darfur. 'The war in Darfur was not in our hands. The decision to make war was taken by higher powers in the state. We, the leaders of the tribes, Arabs and others, were charged by the government to take part in the conscription effort and we only obeyed,' Hilal said." (Reuters, February 20, 2005)

Hilal also gives us a sense of just how unintimidated he is by the threat of international prosecution:

"A UN-appointed panel has drawn up a confidential list of 51 people suspected of 'heinous crimes' in Darfur and has recommended they be tried at the new International Criminal Court. UN sources say Hilal is on the list. Hilal said he would not agree to the 'humiliation' of being prosecuted abroad. 'As an individual who is independent and has a sense of his own freedom in his own country, I do not accept that I be prosecuted outside of Sudan. I reject it completely,' he said." (Reuters, February 20, 2005)

Hilal has of course been strongly encouraged in these views by every single statement coming from senior members of the National Islamic Front regime, including First Vice President Ali Osman Taha and Justice Minister Ali Muhammed Osman Yassin. We should of course expect such intransigence: men like Hilal, Taha, Yassin, and many others have deliberately orchestrated Darfur's genocide and will never submit to anything but forceful extradition. The evidence against them is overwhelming and only grows more compelling. Indeed, an extraordinary op/ed from Nicholas Kristof in today's New York Times (February 23, 2005) reveals the existence of a document, obtained by African Union forces and leaked to Kristof, that almost certainly records fully explicit genocidal intent on the part of Khartoum and its Darfur governmental surrogates:

"This [African Union] archive, including scores of reports by the monitors on the scene, underscores that this slaughter [in Darfur] is waged by and with the support of the Sudanese government as it tries to clear the area of non-Arabs. Many of the photos [of atrocities] show men in Sudanese Army uniforms pillaging and burning African villages. I hope the African Union will open its archive to demonstrate publicly just what is going on in Darfur."

"The archive also includes an extraordinary document seized from a janjaweed official that apparently outlines genocidal policies. Dated last August, the document calls for the 'execution of all directives from the president of the republic' and is directed to regional commanders and security officials. 'Change the demography of Darfur and make it void of African tribes,' the document urges. It encourages 'killing, burning villages and farms, terrorizing people, confiscating property from members of African tribes and forcing them from Darfur.'"

"It's worth being skeptical of any document because forgeries are possible. But the African Union believes this document to be authentic. I also consulted a variety of experts on Sudan and shared it with some of them, and the consensus was that it appears to be real." (New York Times, February 23, 2005)

But even without the document that Kristof reports, all evidence from the ground in Darfur makes clear that the genocidal intent so explicitly declared in this damning text has animated human destruction for many long months as the international community has watched with indifference or impotence. Now the consequences of this impotence and impotence are fully in evidence, and the famine that has become inevitable will take lives in unforgivably large numbers. Darfur's death toll may very well exceed that of



the Rwandan genocide, and even humanitarian intervention of the most robust sort will, at this belated date, be unable to halt starvation on a massive scale.

We have failed Darfur, and the most energetic humanitarian and military protection efforts will still leave us the obscene task of counting again the number of deaths defining genocide in Africa.

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