

## **Briefing: Darfur**

**September 2009**

### **Overview**

1. The violence in Darfur has reached a low ebb, marking the stabilization of the military situation. This is related to the declining capacity of the armed movements, an as-yet-unannounced deal with Chad, the restriction of the SLA-Minawi, and a decline in inter-tribal conflict.
2. The humanitarian and livelihoods situation is also slowly improving, linked to local reconciliation agreements. Drought in north Darfur threatens hardship.
3. The armed movements are losing political direction. However the GoS has not taken advantage of this to provide any reassurance about political participation in the run up to the April 2010 general elections.
4. The Joint Mediation has yet to articulate a strategy for the peace process. The AU Panel on Darfur is likely to energize the search for peace.

### **Has the War Ended?**

5. General Martin Agwai, outgoing Force Commander of UNAMID, sparked controversy with his statement on 26 August that the war in Darfur had effectively ended. His statement is empirically correct. The number of fatalities from violence this year has run at approximately 100-120 per month. The number is declining. The immediate factors behind the decline in violence are the following.
6. First, JEM has been unable to mount a serious offensive since it abandoned Muhajiriya in February. Successive attempts to take over small garrisons in north Darfur have been repulsed. More significantly, there is a deal between Sudan and Chad, as yet unannounced, in which the Chadians and Libyans scale back their support to JEM, in return for the GoS relocating the Chadian Armed Opposition groups away from the border. The removal of the former National Intelligence and Security chief, Gen. Salah Gosh, may be related to this. The SLA is in purely defensive mode.
7. Second, the single major source of civilian deaths during the last fifteen months has been the forces of the SLA-Minawi. These have withdrawn from their strongholds in South Darfur (Gereida) and the eastern part of North Darfur (Muhajiriya) this year, and are active only in the vicinity of al Fashir. As their scope of operations reduces, so too does the number of civilian fatalities.

8. Third, the inter-tribal violence between Arab tribes in South Darfur, which accounted for about a third of the fatalities during 2008, has declined since March. The major reason for the decline is robust action by the South Darfur state authorities.

9. Fourth, the Arab militia remain in a state of stand-down, not undertaking any offensive action.

10. Fifth, UNAMID patrolling and community police services in IDP camps are proving increasingly effective.

11. Consequently, the major ongoing security threats are related to the war economy, e.g. hijacking 4WD vehicles, sundry banditry and looting, and contests over the control of lucrative road checkpoints and illicit trade.

### **The Humanitarian and Livelihoods Situation**

12. Contrary to fears, the expulsion of international humanitarian agencies in March 2009 did not lead to a humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The food situation in the camps has remained more or less stable. With increasing security in some areas, there is an increasing trickle of IDPs returning home. Because of the methods of counting IDPs is based upon new arrivals and ration cards, and does not enumerate those who leave camps, and because people do not hand back ration cards, declining numbers of IDP residents do not show up in figures. The return is particularly pronounced in Gereida in South Darfur.

13. In general, IDPs are developing “multi-nodal” livelihoods which include a family member remaining in the camps, others finding income sources in urban areas, and others sometimes seeking to cultivate in home areas. A number of local arrangements between former farmers and new settlers are reported, consisting of land sharing and similar.

14. Drought in North Darfur threatens crop failure and an early southwards movement of pastoralists.

### **Political Dynamics**

15. The Darfur armed movements have failed to show political initiative. JEM had an opportunity during late 2008 and early 2009 when the Joint Chief Mediator made them the sole intermediary for peace talks. JEM missed this opportunity and with its military threat declining, it is less able to claim political pre-eminence. Other groups are meeting, in Libya and Addis Ababa, but have yet to provide an organizational basis for unification or clear political leadership.

16. In this context, the people of Darfur, including IDPs and others who are sympathetic to the movements, are becoming increasingly frustrated. There are growing demands from these constituencies for them to be directly represented in the peace talks. In

addition, Arab groups are demanding that they should be able to represent themselves and no rely on the GoS.

17. Civil society organizations in Darfur have taken on the task of articulating much of the substantive agenda for peace and reconciliation, moving into the vacuum created by the movements' lack of leadership. CSOs are becoming better organized and more sophisticated and have been provided political cover by UNAMID, especially the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation and the AU Panel on Darfur. They remain vulnerable.

18. The GoS has determined that elections will proceed in as much of Darfur as possible in April 2010. Opinions on this in Darfur are divided. Many, particularly in South Darfur, feel this is an opportunity for Darfur at last to exercise its political weight, in light of census results that give Darfur a large population. Others, especially IDPs and supporters of the movements, argue that the census results have been fixed, that this is a mechanism for disenfranchisement, and that the conditions for free and fair elections do not exist. There is no immediate prospect for resolving this controversy.

### **The Peace Process**

19. The Joint Chief Mediator for the Darfur peace process, having abandoned his former strategy of dealing solely with JEM, has not articulated a new strategy. He has recently become aware of the demand for wider participation and of the need for taking the national elections into account, and has met with CSOs, Arabs, and other armed movements. But he has yet to articulate a strategy based upon his meetings, and he is increasingly considered out-of-touch by Sudanese of all political persuasions.

20. The next rounds of meetings in Doha planned by the JCM are unlikely to make any progress, given the lack of preparation and strategy.

21. The AU Panel on Darfur, headed by Pres. Thabo Mbeki, reports this month. The Panel has been energetic and comprehensive, and has positioned itself to make bold recommendations. The report is first submitted to the AU Peace and Security Council which will then publish it. The draft recommendations have already been discussed with a range of stakeholders including the government and Darfurian constituencies. Pres. Mbeki has also consulted with key international partners including the U.S. The AUPD report is likely to prove the opportunity for a breakthrough.