



**“THERE IS NO PLACE TO HIDE”
HART VISIT REPORT
SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN
JANUARY 2015**



Humanitarian
Aid Relief Trust



“There Is No Place To Hide”

HART Visit to Sudan and South Sudan, January 2015

Picture on Front Cover: A school in Belatoma, Blue Nile State - abandoned because of aerial bombardment.

Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Recommendations, Visit Objectives and Programme
3. Blue Nile State, Sudan
 - a. Background
 - b. Attacks on Civilians in SPLM-N-held areas
 - c. Impact of Attacks
 - d. Humanitarian Situation
 - e. Education
 - f. Government-Controlled Areas
 - g. Refugees in South Sudan
 - h. Refugees in Ethiopia
4. South Sudan
 - a. Humanitarian Situation
5. Conclusion

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Acronyms

AU - African Union
GoS – Government of Sudan
GoSS – Government of South Sudan
NRRDO – Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization
SAF – Sudan Armed Forces
SKBN CU – South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit
SDFG – Sudan Democracy First Group
SPLM-IO - Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition
SPLM/ A – Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/ Army
SPLM/A - N – Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/ Army – North
SRF - Sudan Revolutionary Front
UN - United Nations
UNMISS - United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UN OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Executive Summary

Across Sudan and South Sudan, people who have for decades struggled for peace, independence and to secure their basic human rights continue to suffer war and humanitarian crises. Millions of people in both countries lack access to healthcare, food, shelter and education.

Access to justice, and accountability for crimes committed against civilians, are severely lacking, creating a climate of impunity in which atrocities flourish. The simultaneity of conflicts in the two countries mean that refugees are fleeing from one war zone to another, with one remarking that *“there is no safety anywhere”*.

This report is based on a ten day visit to Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda by a delegation from the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART).

Sudan

Since conflict broke out in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States in 2011, the Government of Sudan (GoS) has targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure with aerial bombardment by Antonov aircraft, missile attacks and ground assaults.

Over the course of this visit, we heard many detailed accounts of aerial bombardment and the impact that it has on every aspect of life – from cultivating crops to accessing education. Civilians described attacks on their families, homes, crops, clinics, schools, livestock and market-places.

“The bombing continues and they are still shelling from Kurmuk,” said a recently arrived refugee from Blue Nile State, now in Doro Refugee camp. *“The Antonovs keep coming and when they find a place inhabited or when they see people or cattle moving, they throw bombs at them. If they see a thick bush where they think people may be hiding, they even bomb that bush. There is no place to hide.”*

Accounts of regular aerial bombardment recounted by individuals from Blue Nile State suggest deliberate targeting of civilian areas. Victims described planes dropping bombs and then circling back to hit populated areas for a second time. Others reported the use of searchlights to

seek out inhabited areas: *“Antonovs come even at night while people are asleep. The planes use searchlights to see where the people are so they can see where to bomb us. Now we have to be careful about using any light, even fires for cooking. The Antonov comes quickly and bombs the area and people hide under trees or in streams”*.

The physical and psychological impact of the Government’s attacks was all too evident: we saw wounds sustained by civilians, civilian infrastructure damaged by bombardment, and the obvious trauma of survivors. The few concrete buildings in the region stand abandoned and derelict – they pose too clear a target for the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), so people stay away.

Since the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in December 2013, around 224,000 people who fled to South Sudan as refugees now find themselves trapped between two conflicts.¹ They are forced to choose between aerial bombardment, isolation and possible starvation in their own land, or hunger and civil war in South Sudan.

The population remaining in Blue Nile State is isolated and in dire need of humanitarian assistance, particularly food, healthcare and education. The GoS is using starvation as a weapon of war, orchestrating a humanitarian catastrophe by targeting crops and livestock, and banning

¹ UN OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot, 31 October 2014.

[Http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf)

“There Is No Place To Hide”

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015



Above: Two women from Mayak, in Blue Nile State. In 2011, they were forced to flee their homes by aerial bombardment from Government planes. They walked for four days, carrying their children and a few belongings, eventually arriving in Doro Refugee Camp, South Sudan. “We need the international community to see the solution to the conflicts between the SPLM-N and the government, so we don’t have to see any more conflict”.

humanitarian assistance. An estimated 940,000 people are now in need of aid in the two areas.²

With their own Government as the oppressor, many now look to the international community for support, protection and justice. A religious leader in Doro said *“If there are people who can get hold of this person [President al-Bashir], let him be accountable for the atrocities he is inflicting on us, because for us we do not have the power to face him.”*

This support is not forthcoming. The issue is not a lack of information - attacks on civilians have been widely documented by groups including Human Rights Watch (HRW),³ Amnesty International (AI),⁴ Nuba Reports⁵ and the Sudan

Consortium,⁶ amongst others. People feel they have been abandoned, that the international community has *“turned a blind eye”*.

Against all the odds, the people of Blue Nile demonstrate a remarkable resilience and a determination not only to survive, but to educate the younger generation. The most commonly recurring theme over the course of our visit was of the need for education. We also saw the remarkable efforts already being taken by civil society groups and the local community to open schools and provide education, despite a lack of international assistance. *“If the next generation are properly educated, nobody is going to marginalise them anymore”*, said our partner from

² UN OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot, 31 October 2014.

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf

³ <http://www.hrw.org/africa/sudan>

⁴ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/sudan>

⁵ <http://nubareports.org>

⁶ <http://www.sudanconsortium.org>
“There Is No Place To Hide”



Above: An eyewitness describes being attacked while fleeing from Blue Nile to South Sudan. The scars of the wound sustained during the attack are still visible. He described the attack: “The Antonov came and threw two bombs. One of them fell amongst us. It killed one girl. It destroyed her head. It also killed Hashim – we did not see him, we only found his leg, all of his body was scattered.”

the Nuba Mountains; “if you are educated, you have the capacity to take your rights.”

Greater support is needed for local organisations who are striving to fill the gap left by the lack of international aid organisations, and to ensure access to education, healthcare and food for local communities. For three years, HART has been working with local partners who deliver food and medicine to isolated communities in Blue Nile State. We receive detailed reports, and on this occasion, visited clinics supported by HART. We saw the excellent selection of medicines and the secure, clean conditions in which they are stored. Local communities emphasised how much they need and appreciate this assistance. Our experience with our partners demonstrates that cross-border aid can be delivered in an effective, accountable manner.

There is an urgent need for an independent, United Nations or African Union mandated Commission of Inquiry into serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed by the GoS in both Blue Nile and South Kordofan States since conflict broke out in 2011. One dedicated colleague from the Nuba Mountains said:

“I challenge anybody who is denying the reality of what is happening in South Kordofan and Blue Nile to come and verify it for themselves... we can show them the reports, the bombing sites, the number of people who have been killed, the photographs, we can lead them from house to house where people have been lost, and take them to meet those who have become disabled as a result of the bombing.”

More effort should be taken to ensure that peace processes are inclusive and that the voices of those affected by conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile can be directly heard (a recommendation which stands for South Sudan as well as Sudan). A representative of a Sudanese civil society organisation said:

“We have experience with the political process of peace, with making peace by just the leadership of the movements, the governments and international friends, and it was a very fragile peace. It was not sustainable. If we want to make a really profound and sustainable peace, we need the voice of the people and of the direct victims to be around the negotiation table. We want to hear the victims from Yabus, from Kauda, from the far villages that do not



Above: Women in Blue Nile State call for peace, January 2013.

even exist now. We want people from there to be able to talk at the negotiation table and to say what kind of peace we need. This cannot be done unless the local community is empowered."

Despite increasing crackdowns on political opposition and peaceful protests, a movement calling for peace, human rights and democracy is growing across the country, including in Blue Nile. Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) leader Malik Agar, the democratically elected governor of Blue Nile State, dismissed by President al-Bashir in 2011, said during our visit:

"What keeps people going is their determination, and the correctness of the vision. We are in a country that is using all means of repression. We are being denied all the basic rights. Blue Nile is diverse in culture, ethnicity, religion, and we want to keep this harmony. But it cannot be kept in the existing system. You have a religious enterprise which does not respect other religions. But people are looking ahead. We want to bring about equality of citizenship, whereby the citizens are equal before the law regardless of their religion, affiliation or anything else."

South Sudan

Fighting between the Government of South Sudan and opposition forces aligned with Riek Machar continues, perpetuating the displacement of nearly two million civilians, including 1.5 million who are internally displaced and nearly half a million who have sought refuge in other countries. The International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that at least 50,000 people have been killed, but suggests that the true figure could be double that.⁷ While there is no official death toll, a small group of civil society volunteers have been attempting to gather the names of those killed, in order to publicly remember them. Their list includes individuals with ages ranging from 14 months to 105 years from six out of South Sudan's ten states.⁸

We met one group of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Agany, Turalei, Warrap State. This group was mainly comprised of women and children from Bentiu and Malakal, whose husbands are currently fighting in other parts of the country, or have been killed. Gaps in the registration process have left many without cards, so they are unable to access humanitarian assistance. Many have not received food assistance since July. They are managing to earn very small amounts of money by gathering firewood, which they can then sell for food, but this is

⁷ Peter Martell, '50,000 and not counting: South Sudan's war dead' <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/50000-and-not-counting-south-sudans-war-dead>

⁸ Naming the Ones We Lost – South Sudan Conflict: 15 Dec 2013 to the present day. <http://africanarguments.org/2014/12/19/naming-the-ones-we-lost-south-sudan-conflict-15-dec-2013-to-the-present-day/>
"There Is No Place To Hide"



Above: Angelina Anyuat with her grandchildren in Agany, Turalei, South Sudan. The family fled southern Sudan during the civil war, moving to Khartoum where they lived for fifteen years. They moved back to Bentiu in South Sudan in 2013, after the country became independent. When asked why they returned to South Sudan, Angelina said: “we are South Sudanese - it is our country”. They were living in Bentiu when the conflict broke out. The childrens’ parents, Ajing Yat and Aluak Mangok, were killed by SPLM-IO forces. Angelina fled with the grandchildren to Turalei in October. They have not yet received a registration card and as a result cannot access any humanitarian assistance. Like many others in the camp, they desperately need food, blankets and healthcare.

leading to increased tensions with the host community. It is also particularly hard for those who are too old to collect firewood, or for families with many children. Some are going without food for days at a time. Everyone we spoke with described an urgent need for food, for access to healthcare and education, for clothes and shelter to protect them from the cold nights. Above all, they expressed a need for peace, and a lack of confidence that their warring leaders can bring it to them. *“Those of us here, we are brothers and sisters, we live together peacefully”* said Toma from Malakal. *“This is a problem of Machar and the Government, they are killing civilians. We don’t know if they can bring peace to South Sudan. We pray to God that He will bring peace to us”.*

The conflict is often characterised as being between two groups - Dinka, aligned with President Kiir, and Nuer, aligned with former vice-President Machar. However, the experiences of those we met highlighted that the reality is far more complex. Many of the women we met were Nuer, whose husbands had been killed by Nuer forces *“There Is No Place To Hide”*

because of their perceived or actual support for the government, or because they refused to support the rebels.

Efforts to foster peace are needed across all levels of society. Support is particularly needed for grassroots reconciliation projects to address local grievances, to heal traumatised relationships and to lay the foundations for a sustainable peace. Details of one such project can be found on page 22.

At the same time, strong sanctions are needed which will alter the calculations of leaders who are more focused on accumulating power than on the wellbeing of their people, and an arms embargo to prevent the flows of weapons which are being used to carry out atrocities.

The conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan are separate yet overlapping. The simultaneity of conflicts leaves refugees particularly vulnerable, making it harder to find safety. The Government of Sudan is fuelling the conflict by providing military and intelligence support to opposition

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015

forces.⁹ We heard a number of reports that Riek Machar is mobilising and equipping additional militias to fight against Government forces with support from Khartoum, including forces under the command of General Daaw in northern Bahr-El-Ghazal.

⁹ Yossef Bodansky, 'Sudan's Hidden Agenda Toward South Sudan Emerging as Khartoum Plays the Role of Mediator Between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar', January 2015, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=187219>
"There Is No Place To Hide" Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015

Recommendations to the International Community

Sudan

- Demand an immediate end to all attacks on civilians, including aerial bombardment, and for humanitarian access to affected populations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile;
- Press for an urgent, independent, UN or AU mandated Commission of Inquiry into serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States since conflict broke out in 2011;
- Hold to account all those responsible for atrocities committed against civilians, including by strengthening targeted sanctions and travel bans on President al-Bashir and other Sudanese officials indicted for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and by identifying other individuals responsible for violations of international law;
- Given that the GoS will not allow international aid organisations access to many war affected areas, the international community should engage in cross-border humanitarian efforts in order to reach those in need - precedent for which is already set by the UN Security Council's authorisation of cross-border aid to Syria according to resolution 2165 (2014);
- Press for the postponement of planned Presidential elections until the conditions are in place for them to be carried out in a free, fair and transparent manner, including a cessation of hostilities, the release of all political prisoners and guarantees of basic freedoms;
- Support the work of local communities and organisations in providing education in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, by providing essential supplies and funding for teachers;
- Swiftly enact an immunization programme to prevent the escalation of infectious diseases such as polio and tuberculosis, which can spread across borders and pose a threat to the region.

South Sudan

- Ensure comprehensive, effective delivery of humanitarian aid to all affected regions;
- Apply pressure, including further sanctions and an arms embargo, on parties to the conflict to commit to and implement an unconditional and immediate end to hostilities;
- Provide support to peace-building and reconciliation projects addressing grievances across the country;
- Press for and support investigations of serious crimes committed during the conflict, and ensure ongoing monitoring of and accountability for human rights violations.

Visit Objectives

Aid

1. To discuss with HART's partners their priorities for aid, as a basis for fundraising and ensuring the most appropriate use of funds.
2. To obtain evidence of the use of funds previously provided by HART, supplementing monitoring reports and accounts provided by partners, and to enhance accountability to donors.
3. To ascertain the availability and adequacy of aid for the populations in the areas visited, and to identify priorities for future aid.

Advocacy

1. To obtain evidence of the situation in Blue Nile State, Sudan, with particular reference to continuing human rights violations committed against civilians.
2. To witness the situation of some of the IDPs in remote locations in South Sudan.

Programme

The team visited Doro Refugee Camp (Maban, South Sudan), Belatoma and Yabus (Blue Nile State, Sudan), Wau (Western Bahr-el Ghazal, South Sudan), Kuajok and Tirolei (Warrap State, South Sudan). We met civil society representatives, community, religious and military leaders, health workers and other civilians affected by the conflict.

Blue Nile State, Sudan

The people of Blue Nile State are divided between four main areas: some remain in Blue Nile State, either in areas controlled by the Government or areas controlled by the SPLA-N; 132,678 are registered as refugees in South Sudan;¹⁰ with a further 35,000 in Ethiopia.¹¹

This report focuses on Blue Nile State, which was the location of HART's recent visit. However the situation in South Kordofan is deteriorating rapidly: according to Nuba Reports, 456 bombs were dropped by SAF in December 2014,¹² the most recorded in a single month since the conflict began.¹³ Some information on South Kordofan is included, based on interviews with partners from the Nuba Mountains and recently published reports.

Information on the situation in Government-controlled areas, and in refugee camps in Ethiopia, is based on interviews with civil society members and refugees in Uganda and South Sudan.

Background

The population of Blue Nile State is extremely diverse, with a multiplicity of religions, languages, tribal groups and customs. It is also an extremely resource-rich area. Its population has faced decades of social, political and economic marginalization, leaving the region deeply isolated and poverty stricken.

During Sudan's long civil war, many people in South Kordofan and Blue Nile supported the SPLA. However, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which led to independence for South Sudan in 2011 following a referendum, left South Kordofan and Blue Nile above the negotiated border, in Sudan. The CPA provided for popular consultations with residents about their status, which were to be led by the state government, but these have not been put in place.

In elections in Blue Nile state in 2010, the people of Blue Nile State elected Malik Agar as governor, a representative of the SPLM, but he was dismissed by President al-Bashir in 2011 and replaced with a military commander.¹⁴

Armed conflict in the Nuba Mountains resumed in June 2011, following disputed state elections, and spread to Blue Nile State in September 2011.

One respondent recalled the events leading up to the outbreak of conflict in Blue Nile state:

"We knew the war was coming, the indicators were everywhere. Troops were moving, tanks were moving within the city and the behaviour of the Sudanese Army started to change. At the time, Malik Agar and the SPLM were the government in Blue Nile, they were in a partnership with the NCP, and everything was in peace. But suddenly people started to change. For example, the military in the street start stopping people because they were SPLM. This war was well prepared from the start. They started to be aggressive to the whole people, not just to the SPLM. Then in the next few weeks, no-one knows exactly what happened inside Damazin, but in these areas some atrocities happened. We personally know some people being cut from neck to neck inside the cities, in their houses, and in other small villages. We know that many villages had been burnt, and we know that they activated the tribal and historical conflicts in that area. They started to empower tribes, for example the Fellata, to recruit them, telling them that Malik Agar and the SPLM want to fight them, giving them weapons and authorisation of open killing. What happened was terrible... people started to move based on the colour and the features. If your features were similar to those of the tribe of Malik Agar, you will be

¹⁰ UNHCR, 'South Sudan: Registered refugees by nationality and location (state), 1 January 2015, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SSD_Refugees_A4LC_150101.pdf

¹¹ ¹¹ UN OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot, 31 October 2014. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Oct14.pdf

¹² Nuba Reports, 'South Kordofan Situation Report'. https://gallery.mailchimp.com/8f4546a2fa9b0892261b50497/files/sitrep_Jan2015_V7_1_.pdf

¹³ Nuba Reports, 'Weeks Of Bombardment Show No Signs Of Stopping As Forces Clash Near Kadugli', <http://nubareports.org/weeks-of-bombardment-show-no-signs-of-stopping-as-forces-clash-near-kadugli/>

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'Under Siege: Indiscriminate Bombing and Abuses in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States', <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/12/11/under-siege>
"There Is No Place To Hide"



Above: A woman from Mayak, Blue Nile, now living in Doro Refugee Camp. She says that life in Doro is very hard - sometimes food rations fall short, and they need treatment and education for their children. Two of Hadia's five children are in government-controlled areas of Blue Nile State. Because they are behind government lines, she is unable to communicate with them. She does not know anything about their situation, or whether they are safe.

killed in a second. No one knows the number of people that have been killed. No one knows where they are. This was the start of the war."

Since conflict broke out in 2011, the Government has employed similar tactics to those used in Darfur, and across southern Sudan during the civil war. They are fuelling conflicts between groups, supporting and arming militias, and giving them permission to kill civilians and take their property. One member of civil society said:

"The Government doesn't have money to pay these people... they give them a white card to go and take money from the civilians, to attack the villages, take the cows of the people, burn the villages. The Government are criminals because they are fuelling tribal conflicts every day, by training, agitation, military provision – they are destroying the social fabric of Blue Nile".

SPLA-N Controlled Areas – Attacks on Civilians

An estimated 70-80,000 people are in areas of Blue Nile State controlled by the SPLA-N – this number fluctuates, as people move back and forth from refugee camps in South Sudan, seeking safety and food. While the Government claims to be carrying out a counter-insurgency operation against the SPLA-N, the reality is that attacks in this region are largely targeted at civilians. One respondent used the following analogy to describe the tactic they have taken: *"if you want to kill the fish, poison the water"*.

Since 2011, SAF have regularly and systematically targeted civilians with aerial bombardment, shelling and ground attacks. Those we spoke with inside Blue Nile State reported persistent aerial bombardment causing widespread fear and destruction, whilst interviewees in Doro Refugee Camp cited bombardment as the main reason forcing them to flee. Aerial bombardment is usually carried out by Antonov cargo planes.

One witness (pictured on page 3) described a bombing attack which killed a number of his group. They were in the process of fleeing to South Sudan.

"The Antonov came and threw two bombs. One of them fell amongst us. It killed one girl. It destroyed her head. It also killed Hashim – we did not see him, we only found his leg, all of his body was scattered. The bomb also destroyed the donkey which was carrying all our foodstuffs. We could not see the donkey or the food. Other people carried those of us who were injured on beds, until we reached Gufa, and from there again they carried us up to Bunj. My arm was destroyed – some of the bones were out. This is why now we are staying here in this camp. That person who is chasing us from our own area [President al-Bashir] he doesn't like us to be in Sudan. If that person wants his people and loves his people he could not cause this much displacement of his own people."

The nature of the bombardment often suggests clear targeting of civilian areas. One refugee, who had arrived from Blue Nile State the previous day, said:

"Antonovs come even at night while people are asleep. The planes use searchlights to see where the people are so they can see where to bomb us. Now we have to be careful about using any light, even fires for cooking. The Antonov comes quickly and bombs the area and people hide under trees or in streams."

One man in Doro Refugee camp, from Mayak, described the situation faced by those left behind in Blue Nile:

"In Mayak, many people are still there. They are hungry. They don't have medicine. They are sick, and they are very afraid. Now, the Antonov is bombing the people. Right now. All the time it is bombing us. Those who are surviving, they are surviving because of the mercy of God. Every day the Antonov comes. Every day."

Another recently arrived refugee emphasised the added terror caused by artillery shelling: *"What is scaring the people is the long range missiles and the Antonov. These two things forced the civilian population to flee from Blue Nile to come to South Sudan. They are just shelling at any time, non-stop, just fire fire fire fire fire fire fire fire fire, we can't even count."*

3 young men from Belatoma, Blue Nile State, described an attack on a marketplace which they experienced in 2012. They showed us the site of the bombing and the mass grave where victims were buried.

"The plane came in the morning and found the market full of people. It targeted the school and the Primary Health Care Unit, and threw bombs at the market. Six bombs fell here in the middle of the market. Many people were killed and injured. This is the grave of 16 people who died, including two sisters."

People scattered, and the plane returned, flying much lower and killing three people who were trying to hide in the bush. This tree was hit and there were many body parts flung up into the tree. They were just hanging in the tree."

The place is almost deserted now. Many people have fled to Doro or other villages as they are afraid the school is visible and will be a target again."

These three men stayed in order to cultivate their fields.

"Those who stay here hide in the streams when the Antonov comes, or dig foxholes on their farmlands where they are trying to survive with subsistence farming. The Antonovs always come here, maneuvering all over the place - by day, in the evening, at night."

The attacks described in this report are not new: they have been ongoing for a number of years. In 2012, Human Rights Watch reported:

"Since the conflict started, Sudanese forces have carried out indiscriminate aerial bombardment and shelling in populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and causing serious damage to civilian property including homes, schools, clinics, crops, and livestock. Government forces, including Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Popular Defense Forces (PDF), have also conducted ground attacks on villages during which they deliberately burned and looted civilian property, and arbitrarily detained people. Soldiers have also assaulted and raped women and girls."

The evidence documented suggests that the Sudanese government has adopted a strategy to treat all



Above: A child in Yabus holds up a drawing of an aerial attack, January 2013

*populations in rebel held areas as enemies and legitimate targets, without distinguishing between civilian and combatant.*¹⁵

In 2013, a report by Amnesty International on Blue Nile State reported:

*"Indiscriminate bombing has been the Sudanese government's signature tactic in Blue Nile state, to devastating effect. Bombs have injured and killed civilians, and damaged and destroyed civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, health clinics and farmland. Sudanese forces have also employed indiscriminate shelling, deliberate ground assaults on civilian villages, and abusive proxy forces. These actions constitute war crimes—which, given their apparent widespread, as well as systematic, nature—may amount to crimes against humanity."*¹⁶

Impact of Attacks

The impact of the aerial bombardment goes far beyond the immediate casualties. *"The effect of the bombardment is so far-reaching, because it touches every aspect of life in these areas,"* said HART's partner in Blue Nile. The persistent targeting of infrastructure, particularly permanent or semi-permanent structures, makes community development almost impossible. All concrete buildings that we saw had been bomb damaged, and abandoned because people are scared that they will be bombed again:

"They hit the villages, the churches, the schools, the clinics. All the infrastructure is being regularly hit and bombed by the planes of the SAF. There is no way you can hide, or operate, in that infrastructure. People no longer build with concrete because they know they might have to move again. They just build temporary structures. Some are living under trees with no proper shelter for their children or their families."

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, 'Under Siege - Indiscriminate Bombing and Abuses in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States', <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/12/12/under-siege>

¹⁶ Amnesty International, 'We Had No Time To Bury Them: War Crimes in Sudan's Blue Nile State', <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/we-had-no-time-to-bury-them-war-crimes-in-sudan-s-blue-nile-state>
"There Is No Place To Hide"

The psychological trauma created by regularly witnessing aerial bombardment and injury, the persistent presence of Antonovs overhead and the lack of places of safety cannot be underestimated:

"It's not just wounds. There is psychological torture - even those who did not have wounds they are terribly psychologically affected because they see their loved ones killed, those who are injured, but also the terror that those artilleries and the missiles and the Antonov inflict in their lives."

Many of those remaining in Blue Nile State are the elderly and the frail, who could not make the journey to South Sudan or Ethiopia:

"When they are squeezed by fire from the Sudan Armed Forces, by air, artillery and ground assaults, there is no way to escape for those who cannot run" said HART's partner. "The elderly are the ones paying the heaviest price because they can't move and can't be easily carried. Most of the time they are left in the houses. If you ask people, why do you leave your father or mother? They say, it is not because you care less for them, it is because you save what you can save, and make another arrangement to come back. They run for their lives, reach a calm place, then leave the rest there and come back to the villages and pick up the others."

Humanitarian Situation

Those we met inside Blue Nile expressed particular concerns about a lack of education and healthcare, as well as an enforced reliance on wild roots as food supplies. Health workers reported a prevalence of malaria and water-borne diseases.

The fear caused by the regular presence of Antonovs overhead prevents people from cultivating their crops. The Sheikh of Yabus said: *"If one of us wants to go to cultivate, he goes to his farm, and the Antonov comes and it chases him away. Why does this happen?"*

High levels of food insecurity result from widespread displacement, bombardment of crops and livestock, and challenges with flooding and pests. During the main harvesting season, between November and January, the particular target of aerial bombardment has been agriculture, creating a situation of severe food insecurity. One interviewee stated: *"The main target is to bomb the farms, to try to burn down the sorghum. If they see something that looks like a store for food, they bomb it."* One member of civil society, who regularly visits Blue Nile, said, *"This season, the crops were attacked by grasshop-*

pers and also by aerial bombardment... I am expecting that people are going to suffer from acute shortages of food in the next six months". Similar concerns were voiced by a community leader in Yabus:

"The majority of the people do not have time to cultivate. Their main source of income is agriculture but they are finding this a very difficult time to cultivate, because of the Antonovs... The harvest that they are having right now can take them up to March, but in April they will start hunger and starvation, until June if nothing comes for food, then the whole area will be starving."

The Government of Sudan does not allow humanitarian or human rights organisations, including the UN, access to the area. Access to humanitarian assistance is therefore extremely limited. A very small number of NGOs are working in SPLM-N held areas, almost all run by local people, with some support from international donors including HART.

For three years, HART has been working with local partners who deliver food and medicine to isolated communities within Blue Nile State.

We receive detailed reports, and on this occasion, visited clinics supported by HART. We met health workers and saw the quality and range of the medicines now available. Local communities emphasised how much they need and appreciate this assistance.

The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), with support from HART, has delivered basic medicines to five locations (Belatoma, Yabus, Soda, Sambri and Danfona) in Blue Nile state which have had a clear impact. They have established five health care centres, together with the local community, which are staffed by Community Health Workers.

HART's partners described the challenges they face in delivering humanitarian assistance:

"Starvation is real in many places in Blue Nile. People take donkeys to carry food stuff. We are so grateful to HART for providing us with the opportunity to obtain food and save lives in this difficult time."

Education

Remarkable efforts are being undertaken by the people of Blue Nile to ensure access to education for their children despite the ongoing conflict, as evidenced by the four new primary schools now open in Yabus, which are



Above: A school in Yabus, Blue Nile State

teaching primary levels 1-5. However, without resources, funding or trained teachers, the quality of education available remains low.

A lack of education poses huge challenges for the future: *“Not many of the young people are going to school - they are fighting instead. If tomorrow, peace comes to Sudan, we will be looking for educated people and we will not find them. We will not have people for leadership positions. We need to help the young people have leadership skills, to have a knowledge base, so they can assume leadership positions in their community.”*

Similar challenges face the people of the Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan. There are 227 primary schools operating in the Nuba Mountains, and around 1017 teachers, both trained and untrained. There are approximately 40,000 students, between the ages of 6 and 20, currently at primary school level, as many could not obtain any education because of constant aerial bombardment during the wars. There is a secondary school in Yida refugee camp (South Sudan), supported by the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization (NRRDO), and another school inside the Nuba Mountains.

NRRDO recently held a conference on education in the Nuba Mountains, consulting local communities on their views. *“The people of the Nuba Mountains said their top priority was education, regardless of the conflict we are going through,”* said Nagwa Konda, Executive Director of NRRDO. *“They said they have been fighting this war for a long time, and they want to change the weapon of war from a Kalashnikov, to a pen”.* Based on the conference recommendations the community want to establish another two secondary schools inside the Nuba Mountains. The local community have offered to contribute by bringing food and support for the teachers, constructing an accommodation compound for the teachers, but they need technical assistance and resources including books and stationery.

“Without education, we cannot change this series of wars in Sudan – peace will be signed, and war will break out again and again and again,” says Nagwa. *“But if the next generation are properly educated, nobody is going to marginalise them anymore. If you are educated, you have the capacity to take your rights. The people said that education is the top priority, and they want all the donors to focus on this”.*

GoS-Controlled Areas of Blue Nile State

In GoS-controlled regions of Blue Nile State, there are an estimated 120,000 IDPs. The Government has not allowed the formation of IDP camps in areas under its control, in order to reduce the visibility of the suffering. According to local civil society groups, displaced persons have not been allowed to congregate but rather are scattered across unknown locations, often without food distribution, shelter, education or healthcare. As a result, according to one interlocutor, *“many are dying of starvation”*. Interviewees who have had contact with those still in Government-controlled areas report extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention:

“If you fall into Government hands, and you are an adult, you will be accused of being a spy for SPLM military intelligence or being military personnel. The punishment is just a bullet to your head. So many people have been killed. In the military camp in Damazin, they used to bring people at night and kill them by firing squad”.

There are increasing fears that those who fled regions of Blue Nile State now controlled by the GoS will have no homes to return to, even if peace comes. There are widespread, credible reports that land and homes belonging to the displaced population are being given as a reward

by the GoS to those who have fought alongside them against the SPLA-N, including mercenaries from Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Mali and Sudan itself. Many have moved in to these properties, bringing their families and livestock with the intention of permanent settlement. Large, fertile tracts of land are being given by the GoS to other countries, particularly Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran for agricultural projects and other investments. This policy of resettlement indicates that the GoS does not intend to allow displaced people to return, but rather to forcefully and permanently remove them from their land. One community leader from Blue Nile, now a refugee in Doro stated:

“They bomb people, and when they run, they give away their land to settlers from the north. They are given the land that belonged to the people. Even if peace comes, they will find all their lands occupied, with papers given, so they will not be able to get it back”.

Recent research by HRW found evidence of rape, arbitrary detentions and killings in Government-controlled areas.¹⁷ Almost half of the refugees interviewed by HRW said they had experienced sexual violence themselves, have an immediate family member or neighbour who had, or had witnessed sexual assaults. One respondent, quoted in the report, said:

Snapshot: Sitting Exams in the Nuba Mountains

In November, 1004 students in the Nuba Mountains sat the Kenyan examination for Primary Education. Nagwa Konda describes the unconventional methods necessary to prepare for exams in the Nuba Mountains:

“Last year, when the exam was conducted, we asked all the students to bring a very clean and big stone, and keep it near them.

We asked them – what are you going to do with this stone? Why are we asking you to bring a big stone and put it near you while you are doing your exam? Some of them said because it will remind us of strength so we don’t get afraid.

We told them it was because when the plane comes and flies over, if you leave your paper the wind can blow it away. They could get mixed up. What you need to do, calmly, is pick up the stone, put it over your paper, and lie down until the plane goes. Because if they start running around, if it drops the bomb, it would hurt so many people, a big number – over 1000. So they have to bring this stone, be ready, at any time the plane comes, very calmly you put the stone over your paper so it is not blown up by the wind, you dive down, wait for the plane to pass, and then you go back, gather your strength, and start again.

This is a horrible experience that these people are going through, and they are not giving up. They are continuing, and even they want to compete with their counterparts in Kenya, who have been studying in a very different situation. This is very encouraging, when you see them smiling, the teachers working completely voluntarily.”

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, ‘Sudan: Soldiers, Militias Killing, Raping Civilians’.

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/14/sudan-soldiers-militias-killing-raping-civilians>

“There Is No Place To Hide”

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015



Above: “We need peace – we don’t need war. My children are here in the camp and they are tired, some have become malnourished. Even in this place, we are still not 100% safe” – Toma Azki in Doro Refugee Camp.

“They raped me one after the other and they beat me,” said Hawa, 20, who was raped by soldiers following her arrest at a market in the small town of Musfa earlier in 2014. “I tried to resist and they pulled me to the ground and [when they were finished] they left me.”¹⁸

Refugees from Blue Nile in South Sudan

An estimated 131,207 refugees, predominantly from Blue Nile, are living in camps in Maban County, South Sudan.¹⁹ The outbreak of conflict in South Sudan has made them particularly vulnerable.

HART spent time in Doro Refugee Camp, close to the border with Sudan. Many refugees have been here since 2011, when the conflict in Blue Nile first erupted. Most arrived by foot; some walked for as long as two months, carrying their children and a few possessions.

The humanitarian situation in the camps is difficult, with shortages of food and limited access to education and healthcare. One woman in Doro said: “we need the conflict between the SPLM-N and the government to be finished, so we don’t have to stay in long queues for food and for medicine, to have problems with the host community when we are collecting firewood. We need the suffering to stop”.

Food shortages in the camps, partially as a result of the conflict which has disrupted the delivery of humanitarian assistance, has led to widespread hunger. One interviewee described a recent scene in Doro:

“We saw children eating leaves from a tree which is really bitter. Unless you are really, really hungry, you cannot eat it. We went to a neighbour’s house. Their child had climbed a tree to eat the leaves, but he was

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nuba Reports, South Kordofan Situation Report.
https://gallery.mailchimp.com/8f4546a2fa9b0892261b50497/files/SitRep_Jan2015_V7_1_.pdf



Above: Shelters in Doro Refugee Camp, South Sudan

too hungry, and he fell down. He broke his hands. He was admitted to hospital and he died”.

During the rainy season, the situation was particularly dire. Hadia and Lemon, both refugees from Mayak, report widespread flooding, including inside their tukuls (houses) which caused hygiene issues and allowed the spread of disease. An outbreak of hepatitis E killed some members of their family. However, they feel that they are much safer here than they would be in Blue Nile. They report that their relatives who remain in Sudan *“must go from place to place because of the bombardment... they live close to the streams and hide in riverbeds from the bombs”*.

Provision of education in the camps, whilst better than in Blue Nile, remains limited. Some children don't have time for school because they must work in the market as labourers, in order to get money or food. Others see it as a waste of time, because they have seen so many people get a certain degree of education but not being able to get far enough for it to make a difference for their lives or communities. Others cannot go to school because they are constantly too hungry.

“Life in the camp is not easy... people are not used to this congested life. Back home they are free – somebody can have thousands of acres to cultivate. Now they are living just several metres from another hut” said Benjamin. “If they heard of peace back home, they wouldn't need any repatriation, they would just carry their children as they came and go back immediately. They are anxious, they want to go and rebuild their normal lives, but it is not possible because there is bombardment, ground assaults, missiles, artilleries – there is no way to live inside [Blue Nile State]. So they are forced to live in this camp”.

Even in the camp there are serious risks of insecurity. Surrounding the refugee camp are at least six active, armed groups, engaged in brutal, overlapping conflicts. These include the GoS, the SPLM-N, the GoSS, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO), the 'Mabanese Defence Force' and the 'Heroes of Maban'. Surrounded by unpredictable, volatile, armed groups engaged in intersecting conflicts, Sudanese refugees in Doro now feel frustrated and scared: *“We thought safety was in South Sudan, but we realized that there is no safety even in South Sudan.”*



Above: Benjamin showing a selection of medicines at a clinic in Belatoma, Blue Nile

“People are trapped in two conflicts, between two countries, with more than six armed groups” said one civil society representative. “Those in the camps are in a very real danger, because they’re surrounded by rebels of South Sudan and the GoSS fighting on the south side, rebels of the north and the GoS fighting in the northern side, and other militias of Maban, supported by the GoS, that are active around there. It is a multisided conflict which increases the risks facing the population”.

Faced with further danger in South Sudan, some refugees are now choosing to return to Sudan. One of the men we met in Yabus had recently returned from Doro Refugee Camp. Originally from Ingessana, he fled with his family after three months of aerial bombardment, when the situation became *“unbearable”*. The family went to Doro Refugee Camp, but when conflict broke out in South Sudan it disrupted the distribution of supplies and they didn’t have enough food. The lack of food and increased insecurity led him and his family to flee back into Blue Nile State, to Yabus, where he has managed to cultivate some food. They have no information about their relatives to remain in Ingessana. He says *“we are tired of war, and we are tired of being displaced”*.

While we were in Doro, reports came in about fighting between the SPLM-IO and SPLA in Jamam, about 60km away. Refugees we spoke with said that they had heard rumours of the fighting and had prepared their things in case they had to flee again, but that they do not know where they would go. Hadia said *“If the SPLM-N can chase away the Government then we will go back to Blue Nile. As long as there is bombing we cannot go back.”*

Refugees in Ethiopia

Around 45,000 people from Blue Nile State are living in refugee camps in Ethiopia. We heard reports that refugees are afraid to venture outside refugee camps, for fear of attacks by militias from Benishangul. This militia was involved with military offensives in Darfur, and has close connections with the Sudan regime. There are cases of young men being captured by militias and returned to Sudan, where they face execution. Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG) have documented the capture of 25 men by militias in Benishangul, Ethiopia, who were then handed over to the GoS. All of them were killed, and some died under torture. Attempts to investigate this incident have been unsuccessful because refugees remaining in Ethiopia are too scared to talk.

The most recent report by the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit (SKBN CU), covering the 16th December

– 15th January, also reported serious security issues facing refugees in Ethiopia:

“The CU continues to receive reports from local informants regarding the extremely difficult conditions being faced by some [Blue Nile] refugees in Ethiopia, including reports of detention, severe restrictions on movements in and out of the camps, as well as abductions and transfer of refugees to Sudan government custody.”²⁰

²⁰ SKBN CU Protection Report # 1 – 2015, Period covered: 16 December 2014- 15 January 2015. Date of Report: 17/01/2015.

“There Is No Place To Hide”

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015

IV. South Sudan

Decades of conflict across southern Sudan left deep fault-lines and divisions, unresolved tensions and grievances, and extremely high levels of poverty. In December 2013, growing political tensions within the ruling party erupted into conflict which spread rapidly through three States, causing massive displacement to other regions. The conflict has been characterised by atrocities committed against civilians including extrajudicial killings and sexual violence.

A report released by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in January 2015, covering attacks on civilians in Bentiu and Bor in April 2014, confirmed that civilians had been killed in hospitals, places of worship and UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites. The report states that in two attacks in April:

“353 civilians were killed, and at least 250 wounded, in the attacks on Bentiu and Bor. At least 19 civilians were killed at the Bentiu Civil Hospital and approximately 287 civilians were killed in a mosque in the Kalibalek area. The attack on the UNMISS Bor protection of civilians site resulted in at least 47 civilian deaths. Perpetrators intentionally targeted civilians, often based on ethnicity, nationality, or perceived support for the opposing party to the conflict. In both Bentiu and Bor, attacks took place against protected objects – a hospital, a mosque, and a United Nations base – which may amount to war crimes.”

²¹

In addition to the immense human cost of the conflict, a recent report by Frontier Economics estimated that if the conflict in South Sudan continues for another 1 – 5 years, it would cost South Sudan between US\$22.3 billion and \$28 billion, with further substantial costs incurred by neighbouring countries and the international community.²²

Efforts to foster peace must take place across all levels of society; not only in the formal peace processes but through locally-led projects for reconciliation across the country. In the words of our partners at the Diocese of Wau, *“a multi-level and integrated approach to tackling the complex issues need to be applied by NGOs and other organizations so as to hasten the process of peace building.”*²³

Humanitarian Situation

In March 2014, during a visit to Warrap State, South Sudan, we found a dire humanitarian situation, with many IDPs having received no humanitarian assistance at all. All across Man-Angui camp, groups of people were boiling and eating leaves.

HART was able to send a small amount of funding, which was used by our partners, the Diocese of Wau, to distribute food before the rainy season began. A second allocation of funding was used to distribute 500 mosquito nets, serving 3000 IDPs. The chairperson for Man-Angui IDP camp, Alueldit, said *“I would love to convey my sincere appreciation to the ECSSS Diocese of Wau in particular; its donors, friends and partners in general for their continual support and good wishes to see that IDPs are fully supported and firmly stood up for.”* HART is deeply appreciative to everyone at the Diocese of Wau for the efforts that they have taken to support those who have been displaced into their area.

However, the humanitarian needs across this region of South Sudan are great, and more funding is urgently needed. On this occasion, we visited Agany camp in Turalei, Twic County, Warrap State, where many IDPs, particularly from Bentiu and Malakal, have gathered. The situation we encountered, and the stories we heard, were very similar to those found in Man-Angui camp in March 2014. We were grateful to the IDPs and local administration for taking the time to show us around, and to tell their heartbreaking stories.

26 year old Mary Fuani Lado is living in the camp with her six children. She is originally from Juba, the capital, but

²¹ UNMISS, ‘Attacks on Civilians in Bentiu & Bor, April 2014’, <http://unmiss.unmissions.org/Portals/unmiss/Human%20Rights%20Reports/UNMISS%20HRD%20-%20Attack%20on%20Civilians%20in%20Bentiu%20and%20Bor%20-%20January%202015.pdf>

²² Frontier Economics, South Sudan: The Cost of War. <http://www.frontier-economics.com/documents/2015/01/south-sudan-cost-war.pdf>

²³ Diocese of Wau, ‘Project Proposal for funding: Community Conflict Prevention and Responses in Twic (Dinka) and Mayom (Nuer) Counties’, <http://wau.anglican.org/index.php?PageID=peaceproject>
“There Is No Place To Hide”



Above: Margaret is from Bentiu in South Sudan. She fled because of fierce fighting in the city, during which many civilians were killed, and walked for ten days to reach Turalei IDP camp. Her husband is fighting - she doesn't know where he is, or if he is still alive. She has been living in Turalei with her seven children since April 2014. She has not received food assistance since July, but manages to earn a small amount of money for food by selling firewood. Sometimes they do not eat for two days at a time. She has no shelter, clothes or blankets for her children, and the nights are extremely cold. The children do not go to school and access to healthcare is very limited. She says, "This pain is the pain of South Sudan as a whole, especially for the women and the children."

her husband was from Unity State, which is where they made their home. Her husband was a soldier in the SPLA. He was ordered to fight David Yau Yau, and was then sent to Bentiu. She hasn't heard anything from him, and has been told that he was killed during fighting between the SPLA and the rebels in Bentiu.

Mary now lives in Turalei. She has a registration card and so receives some food. However, when they fled the fighting in Bentiu they didn't have time to take anything with them, so she has no cooking utensils. She has to cook for her neighbours, and then she can use their cooking pot for her own cooking.

There is a school, but she cannot pay the fees, so her six children are not currently receiving any education.

There were many stories similar to Mary's. Mary Achuil Nyuol, also 26, described fleeing Rubkona in Unity State, and her life in the camp now:

"When the war erupted, our homes were burnt by the rebels and we lost all our property – everything. We fled to the UNMISS compound and they took us to safety. My husband is fighting with the SPLA."

Life is okay here if you have a card. But even then, there is not enough food to last for the whole month, and we are left for several days without any food. We have to go and cut firewood to make some money to pay for food. It is a very bad situation, especially in the cold weather – I have no blanket for my new baby and it is very cold living in the plastic sheets, so we are all suffering very badly".

Apparent gaps in the registration process have left many without registration cards. They are therefore unable to receive assistance including food, shelter and blankets. Those who do have a card have to share their rations with those without, leaving them short of food every month. This is the situation faced by 37 year old Nagwa, who fled Myong County with her seven children. Her parents and husband were killed during fighting between the

SPLA and Riek Machar's troops. SPLA soldiers helped Nagwa and her children to escape to Turalei.

"Although we are Nuers, Riek Machar killed my husband and other civilians, forcing them to choose between joining his army or being killed. If you refuse to support him, his men come at night and kill everyone – men, women, children, animals – everything."

All my seven children are here with me but the situation is very bad. We have 14kg of sorghum to last us for a month but it is not enough to last us all for 30 days. There is no healthcare nearby, and the children cannot go to school because they are too hungry.

When we came, we were registered by IRC [International Rescue Committee] and IOM [International Organisation for Migration], but those who came later could not be registered and were not given cards, so they cannot receive food. So we share our food, which only leaves us enough for 15 days."

Food shortages result in severe suffering, particularly for children and the elderly. While there are some schools, some children are unable to attend because of hunger, or inability to pay the fees.

Margaret Peter, from Bentiu, who has seven children, said:

"We are suffering in the camp because of the lack of food. We struggle to feed our children. We do what we can to get food - we go to the forest for firewood and sell it in the market, and what small money we get we give to the children for food. Sometimes we go two days without eating. Most people in this camp are sleeping under trees, without tents. Our children are suffering because they don't have blankets, they don't have clothes, they are naked."

These needs were reiterated by Toma Ater, from Malakal, who is living in Agany with her eight children: *"The main issues paining us are that we cannot access schools, hospitals, blankets or sheets and we are sleeping outside"*.

Many described how, when they had to flee for their lives, they could carry nothing with them. Consequently

they only have one item of clothing which has had to last for a year, many of which are now torn and dirty, causing health hazards. Children have outgrown the clothes in which they fled. Many parts of South Sudan are facing a particularly cold dry season, with temperatures plummeting during the night, causing severe problems, especially for young children and the elderly. Nagwa said:

"When we ran, we had to leave everything behind – we have no other clothes. The children have to live in the same clothes for a year and they are dirty and torn. It is impossible to keep hygiene and there is a lot of illness."

Health care is severely overstretched and difficult to access, as facilities originally intended for the host community are now supporting a large influx of IDPs. Many IDPs are located far from health facilities, which are severely overstretched. Last month, a nine year old boy was bitten by a snake. They took him to the hospital for the host community, but it was too busy, and he died while they were waiting to be seen by a doctor. During the rainy season, the area flooded and they were completely cut off, making access to hospital even more difficult. Margaret, describing the situation, said: *"three people died during the rainy season because the flood cut them off. No car could take them to hospital. We tried to carry them but they died on the way"*.

Others spoke of ongoing insecurity within the camp. Some of the women described hearing gunshots the previous night, and rumours that the rebels were coming, leading many to run and hide.

The situation in Agany is repeated across the country. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 32% of IDP locations have not yet been reached with any form of humanitarian assistance.²⁴ An estimated 2.5 million people will face crisis/emergency levels of food insecurity between January and March.²⁵

The international community's efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance in 2014 averted a looming famine. However, there is an urgent need to scale up the humanitarian response to alleviate present suffering and to avert possible famine in 2015.

²⁴ UN OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot, 31 December 2014

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South_Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31Dec2014_01.pdf

²⁵ UN OCHA, South Sudan Situation Report No. 70, 15 January 2015

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South_Sudan_SitRep_70_15Jan2015.pdf

"There Is No Place To Hide"

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust | January 2015

Peace and Reconciliation Projects

Across South Sudan, there is an urgent need for local-level peace and reconciliation efforts to address the unresolved tensions and grievances that allow conflict to flourish.

Our partners at the Diocese of Wau are currently seeing very high levels of violence in Twic County, which falls in their region. Twic, a predominantly Dinka county, borders the predominantly Nuer Unity state. Tensions between Nuer and Dinka in the region have been particularly high since the beginning of the political conflict between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar. Our partners' analysis of the challenges states:

"More than 22 years of war left [Twic] County (and other parts of the country) heavily devastated in terms of social, physical and financial infrastructures. This left heavy and deep consequences on the basic fabric of the society that safeguarded traditional and contemporary governance systems which guaranteed peace.

*All these devastating effects connected with the period of civil war have to be [understood] in the framework of the process of post-conflict reconstruction. One key issue identified by various development partners as a potential setback in the reconstruction process is tribal violence. While the war has created a culture of violence, combined with other traditional beliefs, local communities became the major victims."*²⁶

We have seen first-hand the remarkable work being undertaken by the Diocese of Wau to promote peace. More information about their work, and the projects for which they are hoping to secure funding, can be found here:

<http://wau.anglican.org/index.php?PageID=peaceproject>

²⁶ Diocese of Wau, 'Project Proposal for funding: Community Conflict Prevention and Responses in Twic (Dinka) and Mayom (Nuer) Counties', <http://wau.anglican.org/index.php?PageID=peaceproject>
"There Is No Place To Hide"

V. Conclusion

Civilians are bearing the brunt of conflict in both Sudan and South Sudan, as humanitarian crises deepen and a lack of accountability allows atrocities to flourish. In both cases, there is an urgent need for greater humanitarian assistance to affected populations, and to secure a lasting peace.

South Sudan

The ongoing conflict in South Sudan is having a devastating effect on civilians. Insecurity and displacement, in what was already one of the world's poorest countries, have created a humanitarian catastrophe and caused widespread suffering. There is an urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance and to ensure that everyone - including those in more remote areas - can access desperately needed supplies.

The conflict has been characterised by brutal acts of violence, including massacres of men, women and children, ethnic targeting and widespread incidents of sexual violence. Even if a peace agreement is signed, the potential for further violence is high, because of the lack of accountability for crimes committed and the ways in which the conflict has exacerbated divides within the country. A peace agreement is urgently needed - but so are sustained, nationwide efforts to promote reconciliation and address grievances, and national and international processes to ensure accountability for crimes committed.

Sudan

In Sudan, a deeply-embedded culture of impunity for atrocities continues to embolden the perpetrators of violence. On the 12th July 2015, it will have been five years since the International Criminal Court (ICC) released an arrest warrant for President al-Bashir for three counts of genocide (previous charges had already been made for war crimes and crimes against humanity) for the ethnic cleansing of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa tribes in Darfur.²⁷ Three other security officials - Ahmad Muhammad Harun, Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-al-Rahman and Abdel Raheem Muhammed Hussein - have also been indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Yet, President al-Bashir continues to serve as President and to enjoy international travel. Ahmad Muhammad Harun currently holds the post of governor of South Kordofan. He

gained the post ahead of the popular leader General Abdulaziz Adam Al-Hilu in heavily disputed elections.

People rightly wonder why the perpetrators of genocide in Darfur are being allowed to continue to brutally abuse civilians. Many of the tactics employed by the Sudanese Government and Armed Forces in Darfur, including aerial bombardment of civilian areas, the denial of humanitarian assistance and the support of abusive proxy militias - leading to the indictment - have been used in Blue Nile and South Kordofan since 2011, as described in this report.

Many of those with whom we spoke expressed their strong belief that President al-Bashir and his government are conducting a similar campaign of ethnic cleansing in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. One said: *"Genocide is not a joke. It's not a political game. The government really does not want those people to be alive."*

One member of civil society, describing the situation in Blue Nile, said:

"This is a strategy to change the demography of the area, to eliminate these people. Genocide is not only when you kill people, but also if you remove the entire population and put them in another place, where they have to wait monthly for someone to bring them food, and they stay there for years. Genocide is not just killing people but eliminating their culture and their history, destroying their property, making them live in fear so they never come back. That is a real genocide and that is what it is intended to be".

Similar views were echoed by HART's partner in Blue Nile:

"This government is well prepared - they can go on and on for years, without giving us any opportunity for education, land, empowerment, development, for our own human rights. All our rights are denied. They are prepared to keep us in this situation forever, and at the end, they will occupy this land without its people. That is their agenda."

In the face of mounting evidence of war crimes that may account to crimes against humanity and genocide, the international community can no longer turn a blind eye. A coordinated, concerted effort is needed to secure an im-

²⁷ <http://bashirwatch.org>
"There Is No Place To Hide"

mediate, unconditional end to all attacks on civilians, and to establish an independent, UN or AU mandated Commission of Inquiry into serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States. More support is also urgently needed by the groups and individuals across the country who are working for peace and democracy, and to deliver food, healthcare, shelter and education to isolated, war-affected civilians.

Allowing indicted war criminals to continue to evade justice will also have regional repercussions. President al-Bashir continues to fuel violence in South Sudan by providing military and intelligence support for rebel forces.²⁸ Malik Agar attested to the scale of Khartoum's international engagement: *"they [the Government of Sudan] are involved in Mali, in Egypt, with Boko Haram, with al Shabaab – they are destabilising the whole region."* There is therefore a clear strategic and political imperative to hold President al-Bashir accountable for his actions, and to prevent the further spread of the aggression adopted by the Islamist regime in Khartoum across the region.

Despite the suffering that they have endured, the people of Blue Nile and South Kordofan are looking ahead – investing in education, and working for peace and democracy. During our meeting, Malik Agar said:

"For 59 years, since Independence, we have tried this unilateral system of religion and ethnicity. Nothing has changed – there is only reprisal after reprisal, killings, human rights abuses. We ought to try a better one, and the better one is democracy."

"I am ready to shake hands with Bashir. He has killed so many people from my ethnic group and from my village. I can't count – it is above 300 in just my own village, including brothers and sisters, but I am ready to shake hands with him. Myself and Bashir are going anyway – we will leave generations behind. You cannot allow them to inherit hatred".

Malik's words epitomise the courage and resilience of the people of Blue Nile, South Kordofan and South Sudan, whom it has been our privilege to meet on this and many previous visits.

²⁸ Yossef Bodansky, 'Sudan's Hidden Agenda Toward South Sudan Emerging as Khartoum Plays the Role of Mediator Between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar', January 2015, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=187219>
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