About Jebel Marra

The Jebel Marra (JM) massif lies in the center of the Darfur region, bordering the state divisions of Central, South and North Darfur. It is a fertile region inhabited mainly by the Fur tribe and has since 2003 been the primary stronghold of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), a Fur-dominated group. It is the only place in Darfur where an armed opposition group maintains prolonged control over territory and the only area in Darfur to which humanitarian organisations have had no access since 2011.

In Sudan there is no shared understanding regarding the geographical size of JM. Some attribute only the areas in the immediate vicinity of the mountains (referred to as the inner JM area), while others consider locality border areas and a significant part of the lowlands to be part of JM (referred to as the greater JM area). For this document, OCHA is focussing on the mountainous areas in the centre of the massif, the inner JM area, parts of which are controlled by the Government of Sudan and parts by the SLA.

Estimated Population Figures

- There are no reliable population statistics for JM. The latest census was completed in 2008, and then only for certain parts of JM. The lack of access for humanitarian organisations to the area since 2011 has hampered any collection of recent data.
- Current estimates indicate there are some 365,000 people living in the greater JM area, and approximately one third of those - 120,000 people - live in the inner JM area.
- Knowing that some 25,000 people (of the 120,000 people in inner JM) have been displaced to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Central and North Darfur in recent months, OCHA estimates that today there could be some 95,000 people in the inner JM.
- Of these 95,000, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) and community leaders have confirmed that some 47,600 people have reportedly been displaced in recent months.

Humanitarian Access Restrictions

Access restrictions to JM not only prevent humanitarian organisations and individual actors from having an exact understanding of the population numbers in the area, but also block aid to people in need.

The three main obstacles to free and regular access to the JM are:
- Access restrictions by the parties to the conflict, preventing humanitarians from entering both government and SLA controlled areas.
- The unpredictable security situation in general: hostilities, including both ground fighting and aerial bombardment, are ongoing, according to reliable sources on the ground.
- The government has also expressed concern that humanitarian aid could directly support opposition fighters.
In **Central Darfur**, the north-eastern part of West JM (previously Nertiti) and Central and North JM (previously Rokoro) localities have been largely inaccessible since 2011. Only two inter-agency missions have gained access: to Guldo in 2014, and to Guldo and Nertiti in 2015. Negotiations by the UN with HAC and the security services are ongoing. Fanga Suk, although part of Central Darfur’s North JM locality, used to be accessed from North Darfur (up to early 2011), but is now inaccessible. Humanitarians have repeatedly requested access since that time. However in July 2015, OCHA was asked by HAC to plan for an assessment mission to Fanga Suk.

In **South Darfur**, the area usually referred to as East JM (Dirbat, Jawa, Suni, Gorolang Banje) has not been accessible since early 2010. Although negotiations are ongoing, humanitarians have not succeeded in entering the area. A short window of opportunity arose in June 2015 when the government allowed three national NGOs to carry out an assessment (in government-controlled areas of East JM). However, information on this mission has yet to be released following a government request not to publish it. In May 2015, HAC announced that access decisions relating to East JM have now been de-centralized to state level and the Wali (state governor) has the authority to grant access. OCHA regularly advocates for assessment missions with the authorities, but without success so far. The latest request was denied in mid-August, although HAC has stated that it is still being considered.

Eastern parts of JM were accessible from **North Darfur** until 2010 and Fanga Suk until 2011. Since 2011 however the security situation in the state border areas has seriously deteriorated due to the presence of various armed groups, government forces and pro-government militias as well as splinter factions and criminal gangs. Only recently has the situation improved and humanitarians were given clearance by the government to visit five locations in the Tawilla locality (Gosdor, Katur, Martal, Timoa, and Umm Jalabakh villages), bordering JM. This mission took place in early September 2015. While this is not yet access to JM per se, it is hoped that this first mission will be the beginning of regular visits to the area.

### Current Humanitarian Situation and Assistance

- **Information regarding the humanitarian situation in SLA-controlled/disputed areas is sporadic and scarce.** However, due to the ongoing hostilities since 2010 and the lack of access to aid, it is assumed that civilians who remain in the region face significant hardships. In addition, health and education facilities have reportedly by and large ceased to operate. It is impossible for OCHA to assess the amount of assistance provided either through informal means or by people who have passed on assistance obtained in IDP camps (in government-controlled areas) to the SLA-controlled part of JM. However, due to military activity, OCHA estimates this to be minimal. IDPs arriving at IDP sites in government-controlled areas are being provided with assistance and basic services.

- In August 2015, media sources reported increased mortality rates due to malnutrition in Nertiti hospital. International health organisations visited Nertiti and were able to confirm that six children had died in the hospital since the beginning of July due to complications associated with acute malnutrition. The children had been brought to the hospital from villages in the area without...
nutrition services. Humanitarian partners working in the nutrition sector continue to seek authorization to scale up life-saving nutrition services in and around inner JM.

- Tearfund has reported that a total of 423 Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases from the JM area were admitted to their treatment centers in February 2015 (it is assumed these individuals came from accessible and inaccessible areas). The NGO is currently running 5 Out-Patient Treatment (OPT) centers in Central Darfur (Guldo, Golo, Killin, Kati, Kurifal) and will open two more in coming weeks. Some NGOs have expressed interest in scaling up nutrition activities in this area.

- In June 2015, three national NGOs carried out an assessment mission to government-controlled areas of East JM (Dirbat, Dira, Kiba, Krony, Soro, Korbal, Baimadina, Sawani, Bele-Serif, Leiba, Jawa) and established that a total of some 20,000 affected people are in urgent need of water and sanitation services, health, nutrition, education and emergency shelter and household supplies assistance. However, precise findings are still not available and no assistance has been provided to date.

- The last confirmed assistance going into SLA-controlled areas was delivered in July 2015 when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provided food, seeds and tools to some 60,000 people. ICRC also confirmed that at that time movement between government and SLA areas was possible for community leaders (who actually collected the ICRC items and returned to JM).

**Displacement Figures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN JM AREA</th>
<th>AFFECTED POPULATION IN JM AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014 - 2015 as of July 2015</strong></td>
<td><strong>as of July 2015</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47,607 people displaced in mostly inaccessible areas</td>
<td>47,400 Conflict affected 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000 people have left the JM area in recent months and are now in various accessible IDP camps in North, and Central Darfur.</td>
<td>47,607 Reported displacement by HAC 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **365,000** people living in the greater JM area, and approximately **95,000** people live in the inner JM area.
**What Next? Advocacy & Information-Gathering Initiatives**

- The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT) are advocating for regular access to government and SLA controlled areas of JM with all parties to the conflict to ensure impartial humanitarian access according to International Humanitarian Law.

- The HCT and partners are currently collecting information on the status of malnutrition and vaccinations in JM from humanitarian partners, including the state Ministry of Health (MoH), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), with the goal of obtaining an improved understanding of the situation on the ground and advocating for access.

- Humanitarian partners are also working to collect information regarding the humanitarian situation in JM from the newly displaced people at the accessible IDP locations in the three states.

- OCHA will provide additional information following the mission to Tawilla locality and follow up on the request to organize a mission to Fanga Suk (Central Darfur/North Darfur).