

# Darfur and the failure to act

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The crisis in Darfur has been described by the United Nations as 'the worst humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in the world'. The current phase of the conflict dates back to 2003, when the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLA/M) attacked government institutions in Al Fashir (capital of North Darfur State) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) launched a brutal campaign in response. The GoS is involved in arming Arab militias to fight a brutal counter insurgency war on the part of the government and the resulting violence has killed over 200,000 people and displaced up to two million. The government-supported *janjaweed* militias ('devils on horseback'), responsible for most of the atrocities have been neither disarmed nor controlled. The response of the international community has been very slow, and not much has been done to mitigate the humanitarian crisis. Public outrage and condemnation have not been in short supply, but a solution to the conflict and the human suffering is still out of sight. The African Union (AU) has played an active role in efforts to find a solution to the conflict, but the mission has been largely recognized as a failure.

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) has been established in 2004 with the aim of performing peacekeeping operations related to the Darfur conflict. In October 2004 the contingent of mainly unarmed military observers was transformed into a major operation with around 7,000 personnel that includes armed force protectors, unarmed civilian police, and support teams. The decision to rely on the AU mission to halt the violence in Darfur has received broad support. By supporting an 'African solution to an African problem', the United States and European countries hoped to avoid the risk that their military forces would become embroiled in another Mogadishu-like disaster. The West only agreed to train, support and finance AMIS. At the same time, African leaders saw it as an opportunity to establish the AU as the dominant political-military institution in Africa. South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki explained that 'we have not asked anybody outside of the African continent to deploy troops in Darfur. It's an African responsibility, and we can do it'<sup>1</sup>. However, by accepting AMIS, the GoS hopes to avoid sanctions and/or intervention. Furthermore it can be speculated that the Sudanese government agreed to the AU mission because it anticipated that it will not be very successful.

*AU soldiers cleaning their guns in their Tawilla base, adjacent to Rwanda IDP (internally displaced persons) camp, north Darfur. (© Derk Segaar/IRIN)*



The weaknesses of the current mission are numerous. It is a ceasefire monitoring mission and not a peace enforcement mission. The mandate is unclear and vague and does not give AMIS the authorization to enforce the ceasefire effectively. It lacks an explicit protection mandate but is still expected to undertake measures to protect civilians. It is charged with the task of protecting civilians it 'encounters under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity, within resources and capability', but at the same time the mandate states the protection of the civilian population is the responsibility of the Sudanese government – who is responsible for the human rights abuses and killings. Furthermore, the troops have not been sufficiently familiarised with the rules of

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engagement and it has been reported that some soldiers and commanders are uncertain on how to use force and how to react to threats.

AMIS encounters logistical and financial difficulties and the planning capacity has been very weak as the mission even lacks basic accommodation structures. The troops do not have adequate communication capacities and lack general expertise in carrying out AMIS' complex mission. The troops have not only been under-equipped and under-resourced but have been too few in numbers. AMIS is expected to monitor and verify the ceasefire, to provide security for civilians, to assist humanitarian agencies by sharing information and providing escorts, provide deterrence against the various fighting factions, and collect information and intelligence. Given the size of Darfur, and the enormity of the tasks AMIS is seriously understaffed. AMIS does not have enough troops to sufficiently protect itself, let alone protect displaced civilians or humanitarian organizations. A major weakness of the troops lies in command and communication. Much of it stems from the lack of peacekeeping experience that the troops have and a lack of suitably trained personnel which is capable of analysing intelligence information. The fact that troops are contributed from Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Ghana creates cultural as well as language barriers.

Financially, AMIS struggles to find the \$20 million per month that it costs to sustain the mission<sup>2</sup>. United States and European Union financial and logistical support has been slow and limited. Minister Schiltz rightly called 'Sudan the anti-tsunami' by pointing out the serious lack of funding. The EU executive has so far given 242 million Euros to the AU's Darfur peace mission and 360 million Euros for humanitarian aid. With this the financial means are moving towards a deadlock. Donors furthermore complain that AMIS does not have the right mechanism to handle finances effectively and that it has in the past requested the same equipment from multiple donors. The ability of the AU force to bring security will depend largely on the commitment and willingness of donor countries to ensure that the AU force has the equipment, training, and logistical support necessary to carry out its mission.

The armed factions do not respect the ceasefire agreement, and as noted earlier, AMIS does not have the power to enforce it. Although it is widely recognised that AMIS has not been very successful, it is important to keep in mind that it has nonetheless saved lives. It helped to assemble evidence and provoke the outside world's condemnation of human rights abuses. Confronted with the escalating violence and its inability to monitor the ceasefires, AMIS called for UN support in January 2006. UN Security Council Resolution 1706 (31 August 2006) extended to



*Women queue for food in al-Junaynah, Western Darfur (© Claire Mc Evoy/IRIN)*

Darfur the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)<sup>3</sup>. Sudan however, strongly objected to the resolution and said that it would see the UN forces in the region as foreign invaders and the following day, the Sudanese military launched another major offensive in the region. The UN peacekeepers have still not been dispatched, and the U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon failed at the end of January 2007 to secure commitments from Sudan to allow the deployment of U.N peacekeepers in Darfur, despite lengthy talks at an African summit.

The security, human rights and humanitarian situation in Darfur has continued to deteriorate since the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed in May 2006. Attacks by armed militias continue to destabilise the region further as the violence and misery has already crossed the border into Chad and threatens to engulf the Central African Republic as well. The humanitarian situation remains catastrophic and the numbers of at-risk civilians continue to increase as one million of those in need are now out of reach of the humanitarian agencies. As need far outstrips the ability of agencies to deliver aid, localised famine is feared.

The Khartoum government continues to play a game with the international community and maintains that African troops are qualified enough to solve the humanitarian crisis. The only and best solution then is to play the game and give greater support to the AMIS mission for it to become more effective. It is important to keep in mind that more troops alone will probably not bring an end to years of conflict without a negotiated settlement being in place first. Minister Schiltz recently reiterated that the EU is able to play a key role in the reconciliation process whilst respecting African ownership. If the GoS refuses

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the deployment of a hybrid peacekeeping force, more political pressure should be applied and in the meantime the AMIS forces need greater support – both financial and logistical. The situation in Darfur cries out for more intense international engagement to help reach a solution. Now it is time for the application of the *Responsibility to Protect* principle, which was embraced unanimously by the world's heads of state at the 2005 World Summit of the UN, and subsequently by the Security Council. The *Responsibility to Protect* principle expresses that if a state, through ill-will or incapacity, fails to protect its own people from mass slaughter, ethnic cleansing or other atrocities, then that responsibility shifts to the wider international community. After more than three years of atrocities instigated by the GoS, Darfur stands as a test-case of whether the international community is prepared to translate its political commitment of the *Responsibility to Protect* into effective action.

<sup>1</sup> *Refugees International*, No power to protect, The AFRICAN Union mission in Sudan, November 2005, page 1

<sup>2</sup> The Guardian, Ewen MacAskill, diplomatic editor, 'UN prepares to send peace-keeping force to Darfur', Friday January 27, 2006

<sup>3</sup> *International Crisis Group*, 'Getting the UN into Darfur', Africa Briefing N°43, 12 October 2006

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*The Guardian*, Ewen MacAskill, diplomatic editor, 'UN prepares to send peace-keeping force to Darfur', Friday January 27, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sudan/story/0,,1695920,00.html>

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## Vortragsreihe „Jugendforschung im Dialog“

Die Ringvorlesung „Jugendforschung im Dialog“ der Forschungsgruppe INSIDE/CESIJE der Universität Luxemburg möchte ein öffentliches Forum für den Informations- und Gedankenaustausch zu Fragen der Jugendforschung an der Universität Luxemburg bieten. Die Vorträge richten sich an Dozenten und Studierende der Universität, Fachleute aus Politik, Verwaltung, Schule und Jugendarbeit sowie an Jugendliche selbst.

Alle Vorträge finden, falls nicht anders angekündigt, jeweils um 17 Uhr auf dem Campus Walferdingen in Gebäude 3, Hörsaal Piaget, statt. Der Eintritt ist frei.

**29. März:** Dr. Christian Lüders (Deutsches Jugendinstitut München): Jugendberichterstattung und Jugendforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

**26. April:** Dipl. Psych. Danielle Boulton, Dipl. Soz. Andreas Heinen (Universität Luxemburg): Jugendliche im Süden Luxemburgs: Wertorientierungen und Freizeitverhalten

**24. Mai:** Prof. Dr. Mathias Albert (Universität Bielefeld): Jugend heute – Ergebnisse der aktuellen Shell-Studie 2006

**22. Juni:** Prof. Dr. Jürgen Zinnecker (Universität Siegen): Jugendgenerationen und Generationen von Jugendforschern

**12. Juli:** Dr. Waldemar Vogelgesang (Universität Trier): „Ich muss auch beim Glauben meine Linie finden“ – Jugend und Religion in einer individualisierten Gesellschaft

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