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Sudan: 4.9 million IDPs across Sudan face ongoing turmoil

As a result of Sudan's numerous conflicts, about 4.9 million people remain internally displaced in the country; together they make up the single largest internally displaced population in the world.

In Southern Sudan, an estimated four million IDPs and half a million refugees were displaced by the war between the north and the south. 2.24 million people are thought to have returned since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, but they have faced numerous obstacles, including very limited access to livelihood opportunities and basic services. An estimated ten per cent of all return movements thus far have been unsuccessful. Inter-communal violence has also caused significant new displacement in Southern Sudan, with 187,000 people newly displaced in 2008.

Tensions have remained high in the "Three Areas" on the border between the north and south. In May 2008 renewed conflict in Abyei led to the displacement of between 50,000 and 60,000 people and the almost complete destruction of the town. At the end of 2008 it was estimated that over 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Blue Nile State, and more than 100,000 in Southern Kordofan.

In eastern Sudan, implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) has been slow and by the end of 2008 there were still up to 420,000 people displaced within a region that is among the poorest in Sudan.

In Darfur, some 317,000 people were newly displaced in 2008, often for the second or third time since the conflict started in early 2003, taking the total number of IDPs to 2.7 million by January 2009. In the first three months of 2009 a further 65,000 people were displaced. The threats to people's safety have imposed severe limitations on rural livelihood strategies and have led to a rapid population growth in Darfur's major towns and IDP settlements.

Khartoum continues to host about 1.2 million IDPs from all areas of Sudan, but mostly from the south. Most are looking to settle permanently in Khartoum, but their living conditions remain difficult. While Khartoum has seen strong economic growth, many of Khartoum's poor and vulnerable populations, including IDPs, continue to struggle with inadequate access to social services and few sustainable livelihoods.

Map of Sudan



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Source: United Nations Cartographic Section
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Causes of displacement: Sudan's conflicts

About 4.9 million people remain internally displaced in Sudan as a result of the country's numerous conflicts; together they make up the single largest internally displaced population in the world.

Sudan's conflicts, in the south, the west and the east, have all been fuelled by a common cause: the political and economic marginalisation by the central government in Khartoum of Sudan's peripheral regions, leading them to demand a more equal distribution of the country's national wealth and greater political autonomy.

In Southern Sudan, armed conflict broke out soon after Sudan gained independence in 1956. That conflict ended in 1972, but in 1983 civil war started again between the government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). It was brought to an end by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005. The CPA provided for a six-year interim period with an autonomous southern government, nationwide democratic elections to be held by July 2009 (which have now been postponed until February 2010), and a referendum in Southern Sudan in 2011 on self-determination for the south. The CPA provides arrangements for wealth sharing, including of Sudan's oil wealth, and guarantees Southern Sudan's representation in the branches of Sudan's federal government (Chatham House, January 2009; International Crisis Group, 26 July 2007). The "Three Areas" on the border between the north and south, namely Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, were given a special status under the CPA. Tensions in these areas

have remained high; in May 2008 renewed conflict broke out in Abyei (UNSG, 17 April 2009, paras. 15-21; International Crisis Group, 21 October 2008).

The CPA did not address the demands of the people of eastern Sudan, or the people of Darfur in western Sudan. Discontent in the eastern states turned to violent conflict in 1995. In October 2006 the Government of Sudan and an insurgent coalition known as the Eastern Front signed the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA), but implementation of the agreement has been slow and the eastern states remain profoundly underdeveloped. By the end of 2008 there were still up to 420,000 people displaced within a region that is among the poorest in Sudan (HPG, 26 March 2009, p.3; UNSG, 30 January 2009; Pantuliano, September 2005; International Crisis Group, 25 June 2003 and 5 January 2006).

In Darfur armed conflict broke out in early 2003, when two loosely allied rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), took up arms against the government. As with Sudan's other conflicts, the causes of the war in Darfur lay in a history of neglect by the central government, and a failure to share resources and wealth. In May 2006 the Government of Sudan and the faction of the SLA led by Minni Arkou Minnawi (SLA/MM) signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). However, instead of bringing peace to the region, the DPA led to the fragmentation of rebel groups and sparked new waves of violence (HPG, 26 March 2009, p.2; Women's Commission, December 2008, p.3).

In January 2009, heavy fighting between JEM rebels and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) broke out after JEM took over the town of Muhajiriya from the government-aligned SLA/MM (HPG, 26 March 2009, p.2; IRIN, 28 January 2009; OCHA, 20 March 2009, p.1). On 17 February the government and JEM signed the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence Building in Qatar, committing the parties to finding a peaceful, political solution to the conflict. JEM initially suspended its participation in the peace process following the issuing of an arrest warrant for President Bashir on 4 March 2009 by the International Criminal Court and the subsequent decision by the government to expel 13 international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and dissolve three national NGOs operating in north Sudan (see below under National Response). However, JEM later reversed its decision, and JEM and the Sudan government met again in Doha in May 2009. No agreement was reached (IRIN, 18 May 2009; UNSG, 17 April 2009, para. 28; UNSG, 14 April 2009, paras. 2, 5).

Southern Sudan

The total number of IDPs in Southern Sudan is difficult to determine, due to ongoing population movements. Inter-communal violence has caused significant new displacement in Southern Sudan, leading 187,000 people to be newly displaced in 2008 alone (Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, January 2009). The proliferation of small arms has made tribal clashes, cattle raids and other conflicts over resources more deadly (UN and Partners, 19 November 2008, p.253). Attacks by the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against civilians in Western and Central

Equatoria have led to the displacement of more than 35,000 Southern Sudanese and more than 16,000 refugees from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) who fled LRA attacks in north-eastern DRC (OCHA, 4 March 2009). Southern Sudan also hosts IDPs from Darfur, and from the Three Areas, including people who fled the fighting in Abyei in May 2008.

Of the estimated four million IDPs and half a million refugees displaced by the war between the north and the south, a total of 2.24 million people are thought to have returned since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 (UNMIS/RRR, 14 January 2009). However, the returnees have faced numerous obstacles to achieving durable solutions; IOM estimates that ten per cent of all return movements thus far have been unsuccessful and have led to secondary displacement (IOM, 24 October 2008, p.10). Limited livelihood opportunities and a lack of services in the return areas, including health and education, are among the most pressing difficulties for returnees (ODI, August 2007 and September 2008).

The South Sudan Annual Needs and Livelihood Assessment 2008/2009 found that IDPs and returnees are "much worse off" than resident populations in terms of food security: while 11 per cent of resident populations are severely food insecure, the percentage for returnees is 22 and 31 for IDPs and refugees. IDPs and returnees were also found to be far less likely to grow their own food, as a result of which current high cereal prices have had a disproportionate impact on returnee and IDP households. Generally, IDPs and returnees were found to be amongst the most vul-

nerable in all southern states (WFP, March 2008, pp.vii-x, 8, 16, 19-20).

The authorities in Southern Sudan have so far focused exclusively on return to areas of origin as the only durable solution for IDPs and returning refugees. However, many IDPs would prefer to integrate in the towns they fled to, or to settle in other urban areas, to better access services and livelihoods. However, Southern Sudan has yet to establish a legal and regulatory framework for land use and ownership. The periods during and after the war saw widespread land grabs, illegal occupations, coerced sales, and multiple sales of the same property, fuelling various types of land disputes that have had an especially negative impact on IDPs and refugees.

In some cases local authorities have undermined the principle of free and voluntary return in safety and dignity by demolishing IDPs' homes, notably where IDPs had been squatting on private land or on land designated for public use, without giving sufficient notice and without providing alternative shelter to the people concerned. In other cases, IDPs and returnees returning from places of displacements to towns in Southern Sudan, including Yei and Nimule, have found their land occupied by SPLA soldiers or former soldiers, who have used threats and intimidation to stop the returnees from contesting the occupation of their land (HRW, February 2009, pp.31-32; Sudan Tribune, 20 January 2009; ODI, September 2008 and December 2007).

The South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, responsible for humanitarian assistance and the pro-

tection of human rights respectively, are both struggling with a lack of resources and manpower, undermining their capacity to provide effective assistance to IDPs and returnees.

The Three Areas

The Three Areas saw some of the heaviest fighting during the 21-year conflict, and by the end of 2008 it was estimated that over 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Blue Nile State, and more than 100,000 in Southern Kordofan.

Political tensions in the Three Areas remain high. When the CPA was signed in January 2005, no agreement had been reached on the boundary for Abyei, which is close to lucrative oil fields and an important oil pipeline. The matter has since been handed over to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague; a final decision from the Court is expected by July 2009. Increasing tensions escalated in May 2008 into armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the SPLA, leading to the displacement of between 50,000 and 60,000 people and the almost complete destruction of the town. By December 2008 up to 20,000 IDPs had returned, but renewed violence in December caused an estimated two-thirds of the returnees to flee once more, most of them to Southern Sudan (UNSG, 30 January 2009, and 17 April 2009, paras. 14, 17).

In Southern Kordofan, local authorities have reported an improvement in the security situation and inter-tribal relations within the state. Agreements have been reached on the annual migration of the Misseriya (an Arab nomadic tribe) through Southern Kordofan, which had

been a significant source of tension. However, the abundance of arms, local dissatisfaction with the lack of a noticeable peace dividend, and continuing inter-tribal friction mean that Southern Kordofan remains prone to conflict. Recurrent low-scale conflicts in the area are of concern in light of the sizeable presence of troops of both parties in or near the state (UNSG, 30 January 2009, para. 21; UNSG, 17 April 2009, para. 18).

Darfur

In Darfur, some 317,000 people were newly displaced in 2008, often for the second or third time since the conflict started in early 2003, taking the total number of IDPs to 2.7 million by January 2009 (out of a total population of about six million). A further two million Darfurians are directly affected by the conflict, and 250,000 Darfurians live in refugee camps in Chad (Darfur Humanitarian Profile No.34, January 2009). In the first three months of 2009 a further 65,000 people were displaced (ERC, 26 March 2009).

IDPs in Darfur continue to be vulnerable and exposed to violence as a result of deliberate attacks by both government forces and rebel groups. In August 2008, Sudanese government forces opened fire in Kalma camp, killing 33 civilians and wounding at least 85 people. Rape and sexual violence continue to be systematic and widespread, leaving women and children in and around IDP camps and settlements especially vulnerable. Children continue to be recruited and used by all parties to the conflict. Human rights and protection monitors have frequently been unable to do their work due to widespread insecurity and to efforts by the government or armed groups to deny

them access (HRC, 2 September 2008, and 2 September 2008 (addendum)).

The steadily deteriorating security situation in Darfur means that the numbers of IDPs and conflict-affected people are growing continuously while access to rural areas is increasingly hampered. The threats to people's safety have imposed severe limitations on rural livelihood strategies and have led to a rapid population growth in Darfur's major towns and IDP settlements. While in 2003 about 18 per cent of Darfurians lived in urban areas, today Darfur is about 35 per cent urbanised, with one in four Darfurians living in Nyala. Darfur's socio-economic fabric has thus been profoundly changed by the conflict, and it is likely that the future of many of Darfur's IDPs will be in the cities, even after a political agreement has been reached (DHP No. 34, January 2009, p.18; de Waal, 31 March 2009).

The Darfur Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (DFSLA) 2008 found major differences between the food security of IDPs in camps, IDPs in communities and resident communities, with IDPs in camps remaining the most vulnerable: 42 per cent of them were food secure compared with 51 per cent of IDPs in communities and 63 per cent of residents. The DFSLA report warned that during the lean season (usually April through September) food insecurity would probably affect higher numbers of people and would become more severe (Government of Sudan et al., 23 February 2009, pp.1-2).

The Government of Sudan continues to promote the return of IDPs, particularly to central or "cluster villages", which is in turn actively discouraged by the DPA's non-signatory groups (ODI, December

2008, p.4). At the end of 2008, the government's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) announced a probable relocation of IDPs from Kass camp to Kass rural areas in South Darfur, raising concerns about voluntary and dignified return and freedom of movement (DHP No.34, January 2009, p.16).

Some IDPs in Darfur tried, without success, to prevent the 2008 census from taking place in Darfur, fearing that the results were unlikely to be representative as long as hundreds of thousands of people remained displaced, and that the census would instead legitimise the presence of people who had occupied IDPs' homes and land. While the census went ahead, the results have yet to be released (Human Rights Council, 2 September 2008, para.15).

Khartoum

Khartoum continues to host about 1.2 million IDPs from all areas of Sudan, but mostly from the south. While significant numbers of IDPs have returned from Khartoum to Southern Sudan since the signing of the CPA, a majority of the remaining IDPs do not intend to return to their areas of origin and are looking to settle permanently in Khartoum (UN and Partners, 19 November 2008; Tufts-IDMC, August 2008). Moreover, a significant number of IDPs who returned to the south have come back to Khartoum due to the lack of livelihoods opportunities and lack of access to services in their areas of origin (Tufts-IDMC, August 2008). For IDPs who returned to the south by means of organised returns, the proportion of "returnees" may be as high as 30 per cent (USAID, 6 February 2009).

Nevertheless, living conditions remain difficult for the majority of Khartoum's IDPs. While Khartoum has seen strong economic growth in recent years, with increased investment in services, this growth has not been evenly spread and many of Khartoum's urban poor and vulnerable populations, including IDPs, continue to struggle with high levels of poverty, inadequate access to social services and few sustainable livelihoods (UN and partners, 19 November 2008, p.201; Landinfo, 3 November 2008, pp.12-13).

IDPs in Khartoum also continue to be at risk of government demolition and relocation programmes. These started in 1991 and have intensified from 2005 onwards; an estimated 665,000 IDPs have had their homes demolished in such programmes, half of them since 2004 (Tufts-IDMC, August 2008). Demolition and forced relocation programmes continue; in December 2008 thousands of people were made homeless when the Mandela settlement was demolished, forcing people to live in makeshift shelters made of sticks and cloth in a slum 20 kilometres south of Khartoum (IRIN, 4 December 2008).

National response and humanitarian access

In March 2009, following the issuing of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for President Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Government of Sudan expelled 13 international NGOs and revoked the licences of three Sudanese aid agencies. The expulsions have directly affected 7,610 aid workers (308 international staff and 7,302 Sudanese nationals) in all of northern Sudan, including Darfur. The 16 agencies together ac-

counted for 40 per cent of aid workers, delivering more than half the total amount of aid (HPG, 26 March 2009). Despite appeals from the international community to reverse the decision, none of the expelled agencies have been allowed to resume their operations.

Independent observers have warned that the expulsions "could lead to serious humanitarian consequences in terms of renewed violence, displacement and possibly a deterioration in health and nutrition in some population groups" (HPG, 26 March 2009, p.12). Moreover, beyond the immediate impact on the humanitarian situation in Sudan, "The expulsions will also have implications for the multiple peace processes in the country, as they will threaten recovery in other war-affected areas of Sudan beyond Darfur, as well as undermining the prospects for sustainable peace. Affected agencies have been increasingly active in developing interventions aimed at conflict resolution, particularly focused on the shared management of common resources, an issue at the heart of much local conflict. The CPA is supposed to provide people with security and development. The expulsion of NGOs from war-affected states such as Eastern Sudan and the Transitional Areas will further undermine the implementation process, with the danger of substantial repercussions for the forthcoming elections and the 2011 referendum in the South" (HPG, 26 March 2009, p.12). In 2008 the government began the process of drafting a national IDP policy.

International Response

Sudan is the only country in the world with two international peacekeeping forces: the UN Mission in Sudan

(UNMIS) and African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

UNMIS is tasked with supporting the implementation of the CPA; protecting civilians under imminent threat of physical violence; facilitating the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons; and contributing towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Sudan. UNMIS's mandate currently runs until 30 April 2010. UNMIS has come under criticism for failing to fulfil its mandate in relation to the protection of civilians, in particular during the outbreak of violence in Abyei in May 2008 which led to the displacement of over 50,000 people (Reuters, 17 June 2008; HRW, February 2009, p.43).

UNAMID replaced the struggling African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) in January 2008, and has currently been authorised until 31 July 2009. Its mandate includes supporting the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. UNAMID's effectiveness has been severely limited by the failure of the international community to contribute sufficient troops and equipment (UNSG, 14 April 2009, paras. 47, 53 and 54; Sudan Tribune, 16 March 2009). UNAMID also continues to face restrictions on its freedom of movement imposed by the Government of Sudan and its security forces (UNSG, 14 April 2009, para. 34).

Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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