



Genocide in the Darfur Region of Sudan

Civil war has existed between the northern and southern regions of Sudan for more than a decade. The northern region, centered on the capital of Khartoum, is predominantly made up of Muslims who are ethnically Arab, while groups of Christians and animists live in the south. The Khartoum government under General Omar al-Bashir wished to create a more Islamic-based government that was opposed by the southern groups and led to civil war. Not until 2005, and with heavy international influence, did the Comprehensive Peace Agreement end the two-decade-long civil war that had resulted in more than 2 million deaths and 4 million displaced persons in the south. In the western region of Darfur, a rebel group sought to have the same benefits and attacked a government outpost in 2003. The government of Sudan reacted with crushing brutality.

Although the Darfur region is predominantly Muslim, there were economic and tribal/ethnic differences in the region. Economically, the Arab groups had been nomadic herders while the African groups (such as the Fur, Maasalit and Zaghawa) were pastoralists. The Sudanese government exploited these differences by arming ethnic Arab militia groups, known as the “Janjaweed,” to attack the ethnic African groups. The government would attack from the air, and then, the Janjaweed forces would enact a scorched earth campaign, burning villages and poisoning wells. Nearly 400,000 people have been killed, women have been systematically raped and millions of people have been displaced as a result of these actions.

In 2004, the United States government recognized these actions as genocide under the United Nations (UN) Genocide Convention. Criminal proceedings have begun with the International Criminal Tribunal, and both the African Union and United Nations have sought to introduce forces to stop the violence and aid the internally displaced, as well as refugees who fled to Chad. In March 2009, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for directing a campaign of mass killing, rape and pillage against civilians in Darfur, in addition to the outstanding warrants for former Sudanese Minister of State for the Interior Ahmad Harun and Janjaweed militia leader Ali Kushayb. Despite this progress, according to UN estimates, 2.7 million Darfuris remain in internally displaced persons camps and more than 4.7 million Darfuris rely on humanitarian aid.

On July 9, 2011, South Sudan became the world's newest country. While this is a major step toward ending the violence in Sudan, civilians across Sudan remain at risk. Systematic violence against the people of Darfur, as well as in the disputed Abyei area and Southern Kordofan, continues on a new political landscape altered by the independence of South Sudan.

Resources on This Topic

Books:

- “Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction,” by Adam Jones
- “Not on Our Watch: The Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond,” by Don Cheadle and John Prendergast
- “Darfur’s Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide,” by M.W. Daly

Web sites:

- <http://www.genocideintervention.net/>
- <http://www.savedarfur.org/content>
- <http://www.enoughproject.org/>

