

# briefing

**Darfur, 14 September 2006** To the international community, the conflict in Darfur has been resolved according to the peace agreement. The reality on the ground tells another story. The conflict has escalated, with more killings, sexual abuse and exploitation than ever before.

## Newly displaced yearn for peace in North Darfur

They walked for two days and one night through the desert, fleeing an attack on Hilla Babikir and surrounding villages. "When the attack took place, we just ran. I don't know what happened to the people we left behind," Ishac, a community leader, said.

As he spoke, an Antonov plane flew overhead and the sounds of explosions could be heard in the distance – underlining why members of the Berti community had fled their homes. They ran for cover each time an explosion reverberated through El Salaam IDP camp.

Kaltum Saleh Adam Saleh fled Turra with just some food and a cooking pot. The 32-year-old woman ran from the village with her five children during the attack and was separated from her husband, whom she has not seen since. "I've been here for 41 days now and I don't have shelter. The rain is falling on us. At night, we're attacked by mosquitoes and during the day there is no shade to hide from the sun," Saleh said.

"We can get medical support, but under these conditions, children get sick anyway," she added. One child, Acha Ishac, died last week of a respiratory infection.

None of the new arrivals, awaiting official registration, had received food assistance, forcing most women to venture outside the camp to collect firewood and grass to sell so they could buy food. The fortunate few with relatives in El Fasher were being supported by their kin.

The latest influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) follows the approximately 18,000 people who had earlier arrived in El

Salaam from Korma. This area to the west of El Fasher, including that south of Tawilla town, has been the second scene of fighting in North Darfur State, dominated by clashes between rebel factions.

IDPs from Korma started to arrive in the first week of July, after former rebels of Minni Minnawi's Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLM/A) – who signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese government on 5 May – attacked their villages in an attempt to flush out rebels from Abdelwahid Mohamed Al-Nur's rival SLM/A faction who did not sign the peace deal.

African Union sources reported finding several mass graves, saying at least 80 people had been killed. "Thousands of people might still be displaced in the Korma area, but humanitarian organisations pulled out after attacks against them soared, so we don't know what is happening," a UN humanitarian official observed.

EL Salaam has about 31,000 IDPs, while Abu Shouk camp, located just across a dry riverbed, houses another 54,000.

Clashes with NRF rebels north of El Fasher have developed into a full-blown government offensive, but no fleeing villagers have so far arrived in El Salaam camp. Although life in general is not easy in the camp, the issue on everybody's mind is security. Most community leaders inside the IDP camps support the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force in the region, claiming that neither Al-Nur nor Minnawi rebels nor the Sudanese government can provide security.

"They just come and go – you cannot

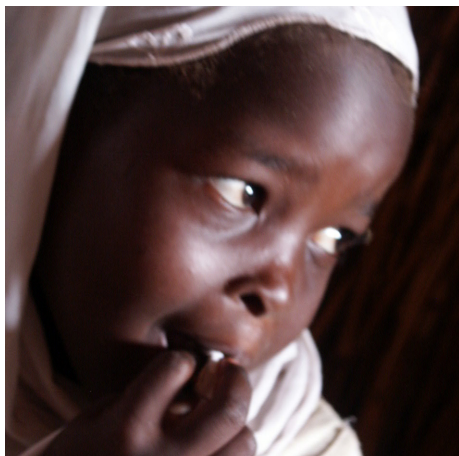
count on them – they don't stay. The African Union troops are of no help, either," someone said "Even if people come into the camp and take things at gun point, they don't do anything – only an international force can provide protection."

On 31 August, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for a gradual transition from the AU mission in Darfur to a stronger UN protection force. But the deployment of the UN force of 17,500 troops and 3,300 civilian police is contingent on consent by the government of Sudan, which has so far rejected calls for a UN force in Darfur.

"When we heard about the peace, we expected to see the impact on the ground, but the Sudanese government has had no interest in implementing it and our brothers who signed the peace are still roaming around," Omda Ali Mohamed Fadul, a community leader said.

"All humanitarian aid agencies pulled out of the area west of Tabit and south of Tawilla due to insecurity – it is the height of the hunger-season and the last food distribution in that area was in July," one aid worker warned. The Sudanese government has deployed about 10,000 soldiers to El Fasher, and the recent movement of as many as 50 NRF vehicles into Korma and Tawilla has sparked rumours of an impending rebel counter-attack that would throw the volatile region into turmoil once again.

"If a UN force is not deployed any time soon, something much worse is going to happen here," the SLM/A commander added.



### Save the Children Sweden calls for:

- UN peace keeping forces to be deployed to maintain security in the region.
- Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and reunification – children must be demobilised and reintegrated with their families and communities. A rigorous system of independent monitoring of DDR must be put in place.
- Support to education and protection of children in the IDP camps.

Save the Children Sweden is operative in the IDP camp of Al Salaam, and until recently also in IDP camps in Tawilla and Kutum. The focus is to protect children from physical and sexual violence, exploitation, and to promote education, social integration and reconciliation.

<http://ecaf.savethechildren.se>



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