Beyond 'Janjaweed': Understanding the Militias of Darfur

By Julie Flint

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

HM Government

NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACC	Arab Coordination Council
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
CRP	Central Reserve Police
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
ICC	International Criminal Court
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
NCP	National Congress Party
NIF	National Islamic Front
PFA	Popular Forces Army (aka Revolutionary Democratic Forces Front)
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade (launcher)
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SRF	Sudanese Revolutionary Front
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

About the author

Julie Flint is a journalist and Sudan researcher. She has co-authored two books on Darfur with Alex de Waal—most recently, *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*—and published a chapter on the rebel movements in a third, *Darfur: War and the Search for Peace.* She has acted as a consultant on the Darfur conflict and the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks in Abuja for a range of international organizations and rights groups; she attended four sessions of the talks between 2004 and 2006.

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Abstract

In an effort to control a rebellion in Darfur, Sudan's westernmost region, the Government of Sudan waged a ruthless counterinsurgency in 2003–04 by appealing to tribes to fight in support of the weak and demoralized army. The rebellion was organized mainly by three non-Arab groups—the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit—and most of the recruits to the counterinsurgency came from groups claiming an 'Arab' identity. A massive destruction campaign caused the deaths of at least 200,000 people and drove 1.5 million into displaced camps. More than 200,000 others crossed the border and became refugees in eastern Chad. An unprecedented advocacy campaign in the West called the conflict 'the first genocide of the 21st century' and tended to conflate Darfur's Arabs, most of whom remained neutral, with the government-supported 'janjaweed' militias and paramilitaries. This *Working Paper* examines the mobilization of 2003–04, who supported it and who did not—and why. It attempts to distinguish this period of the war from the years that followed. While recognizing that terrible things happened, with long-lasting destructive consequences, it argues that the conflict, the militias, and their role all changed over time—a fact lost in a continuing narrative of 'janjaweed' and 'victims'.

I. Executive summary

More than six years after Darfurians drawn largely from non-Arab tribes declared themselves in rebellion, Sudan's westernmost region is a confusion of armed enclaves and seemingly intractable conflicts. The government's writ runs only in the towns, and even there its control has been challenged by the militias recruited mostly from Arab tribes that it armed as counterinsurgency proxies in 2003. Today those same paramilitaries are themselves insurgent, and the government's security challenge is as much to control the counterinsurgents as to fight the rebels.

The number of violent deaths reported in Darfur is much reduced—from thousands per month at the height of the conflict in 2003–04 to approximately 130–150 per month from January 2008–March 2009, roughly one-third of whom were people killed in intra-Arab clashes.[1] With the initial military threat posed by the rebellion contained, the combined government–militia offensives that set Darfur ablaze in 2003–04 have given way to periods of relative calm with spikes of extreme violence. The militias have taken on a life of their own, for their own reasons. They feel betrayed by the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), which disregarded the concerns of their communities, and do not trust the government to represent their interests.

Collectively demonized as 'janjaweed'[2]—a word that originally described common criminals—and excluded from most forms of international assistance and engagement most of the time, Darfur's Arabs are attempting to find a voice and a forum in which to address the economic fragility and social neglect that has made them vulnerable to government pressures and inducements.[3]

The causes of the conflict in Darfur are complex and deep-rooted, involving political and economic marginalization, failing institutions (especially security and judicial institutions), environmental degradation, population pressure, and ubiquity of small arms as a result of regional conflicts, uncontrollable borders, and past arms distributions by the government to militias such as the *murahaliin*.[4] A 'racial' dimension introduced to the conflict in the 1980s, to

Map 1 **Darfur, Sudan**

NORTH DARFUR

Wadi Howar

Furawiya

Wakheim

Jebel Meidob

CHAD

Tine

Dor

Girgira

Abu Gamra

Ain Siro

Misteriha

Um Sidir

Kutum

Mellit

Aamo

Al Fasher

Al Geneina

Birkat Seira

Kabkabiya

Tawila

Wadi Barei

SUDAN

WEST DARFUR

Nyertiti

Jebel Marra

Shangil Tobay

Zalingei

Habila

Kass

Shearia

Deleig

Foro Baranga

Nyala

Wadi Salih

Mukjar

Muhajiriya

Haskanita

Idd Al Fursan

Al Da'ein

SOUTH DARFUR

CAR

International boundary

State boundary

Main road

National capital

State capital

Highlands

0 km 100

support an ideology based on 'Arab' supremacy, has sharpened into an ethnic divide in which the militias are predominantly pastoralists claiming an Arab identity and the rebels predominantly settled, or semi-settled, communities self-identified as 'Africans'.

Paradoxically, the Abbala (camel herders) who formed the spearhead of the government's counterinsurgency campaign in 2003—crucially, the landless Northern Rizeigat[5]—were generally more marginalized and impoverished than the non-Arabs who led the insurgency. A system whereby nomadic tribes not assigned land of their own had customary rights to land and water along transhumant routes began to break down in the 1980s and collapsed in many areas after 2000, as rebellion spread. Pastoralists have seen their livelihoods further damaged by the devastation they helped bring about, including the loss of markets, schools, and clinics, and the destruction of the symbiotic relationship between herder and farmer. Militia salaries have become a coping mechanism, even a badge of honour for some poor communities (Young et al., 2009).

Disenchanted with the government, but unable to find other patrons, Darfur's militias are in the throes of a process of fragmentation that parallels that of the two original rebel movements—the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Government officials privately acknowledge that they are unable to control the militias, except temporarily through more money and more weapons. But they lack a long-term strategy to restore order in Darfur, and isolated attempts to impose control are negated by impunity and short-termism dictated by perceived military need—especially in the face of the new firepower of the Chadian-backed JEM, the rebel group whose leaders were once part of the Sudanese regime and which Khartoum fears more than any other.

This *Working Paper* is not a comprehensive account of the scores of tribal militias that have been armed by, or cooperated with, the government. Its subject is not the human rights violations committed in the course of the counterinsurgency. Rather, it seeks to disentangle the militias and to begin to understand their motivations and grievances. It argues that without engaging the Darfur Arabs there cannot be a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Key findings include the following:

- The government's mobilization of tribal militias was a tried and tested policy, in part a reflection of the weakness of the professional army. Faced with new and unfamiliar tactics of mobile warfare, the government turned to Darfurians who knew the terrain, already carried arms to protect their herds, and whose involvement enabled it to depict the conflict as 'tribal'.
- Tribal leaders supported the counterinsurgency for two main reasons—land and money. Landless Arab groups saw an opportunity to expand their access to land and by extension, since land is connected to the possession of paramount chiefdoms, to political power. Tribes with land attempted to remain neutral. Government cash payments rented loyalty. When they stopped, defections started.
- Dissident militias have received no support from any quarter. This has weakened their position and, given their need for money, always pushed them back to Khartoum.
- Fearing bloody reprisals by their victims, the militias today believe that weapons are more than ever necessary to their survival.
- Although ethnicity has been manipulated by all parties to the conflict, and ethnic lines have been sharpened by depiction of the conflict as a 'genocidal' war against 'Africans', local politics trump 'racial' identity when the government takes a back seat and neighbours with long histories of coexistence sit down to settle their differences.
- Because their situation is less visible than that of the hundreds of thousands of villagers who have been forced off their lands, and because their human rights violations have been so egregious, tribes involved in the counterinsurgency have rarely been contacted by international actors and almost no attempt has been made to understand their motivations. There is insufficient understanding of why they took up arms—and what can convince them to put them down.
- Repeated calls on the government to disarm the 'janjaweed' have ignored the plurality of the militias and their motives, and have overestimated its ability to control the militias. Timeframes, beginning with the 30-day deadline set by the UN Security Council in July 2004, have been unrealistic. At the same time, the government has made no serious attempt to disarm or restrict the militias.

- As the government has used the militias, so have the militias used the government—to obtain salaries, war booty, land, and revenge. Always undisciplined—in fact encouraged to be undisciplined by the promise of loot—many are today beyond the control either of the government or, in some cases, of their own tribal leaders.
- In the seventh year of the insurgency, and in the absence of a comprehensive negotiated settlement to the conflict, the powerful new military challenge posed by JEM threatens a resurgence of government-supported militias.

Based on fieldwork in North and South Darfur, this *Working Paper* traces the mobilization of militias in 2003, the frustration with the DPA of 2006, and the slow-burning rebellion that culminated in the mutiny of the strongest paramilitary leader, Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo, known as 'Hemeti', in 2007.[6] The Arab militias have been insufficiently examined and are poorly understood. If Darfur is to have peace, their circumstances, political demands, and social and economic needs will require serious scrutiny and analysis. The militias are part of the problem and must be part of the solution.

II. Mobilizing the militias

The militia strategy

The 'militia strategy' in Sudan pre-dates the present regime of President Omar al Bashir and the National Congress Party (NCP).[7] It was first employed, in systematic fashion, in Southern Sudan by the government of Gen. Abdel Rahman Suwar al Dahab in 1985 and has set the pattern for every subsequent war—in the Nuba Mountains of central Sudan, the oilfields of Southern Sudan, and most recently, in Darfur.[8] Given the huge financial cost of mobilizing the regular army to fight the southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the unpopularity of the draft, and the uncertain loyalty of many army officers, Military Intelligence armed two Arab tribes in South Darfur and South Kordofan, the Missiriya and Southern Rizeigat, and encouraged them to devastate communities suspected of supporting the SPLA. Popularly known as *murahaliin,* the militias were not paid but were allowed to keep whatever they looted, including cattle, household possessions, and even women and children.[9] The counterinsurgency formula comprised ethnically targeted killing, and total impunity (de Waal, 2007a, pp. 27–28).

In Darfur, the National Islamic Front (NIF), which seized power in June 1989, used a combined force of army and *fursan*, a militia drawn from the Beni Halba Arabs, to counter an SPLA incursion into South Darfur in 1991. Entire villages were burned on suspicion of having helped the invaders. In North Darfur, clashes between pastoralists and farmers over water and grazing land, especially in the wake of the great drought and famine of 1984–85, escalated into war in the central Jebel Marra region in 1988–89 as Arab fighters trained in Libyan camps returned to Darfur following the overthrow of the regime of President Jaafar Nimeiri and small arms flooded the region.[10] In West Darfur, the government began arming ethnic militias in the mid-1990s after administrative reform shifted the balance of power in favour of Arab tribes and tipped Dar Masalit into war. In January 1999, after years of attacks and counter-attacks that killed almost 700 civilians and burned dozens of villages, President

Bashir dispatched a personal representative, Gen. Mohamed Ahmad al Dabi, to 'restore calm' (Flint and de Waal, 2008, p. 62). Al Dabi's weapon was an established militia from Southern Sudan, the Quwat as Salaam (Peace Forces), supported by government-backed irregulars mustered by the newly appointed Arab chiefs.

From this time on, villages were attacked with impunity—especially in the fringes of the Jebel Marra mountains where Fur and Zaghawa activists met in May 2001 and agreed to fight the government together, to create 'a united democratic Sudan on a new basis of equality, complete restructuring and devolution of power' (SLM/SLA, 2003).

The call to arms

As tensions in Darfur increased, Arab elders in North Darfur noticed with concern an initiative they say contained the germ of the 'janjaweed' of the approaching war: government officials summoned a number of 'outlaws'—criminals in the eyes of their own tribal administrations—and 'made them into a group', giving them weapons, identity cards, and money to buy camels. The group included Arabs and non-Arabs, but its two most notorious members were both Arabs—Saeed Abdalla Hussein, a member of the Zabalat tribe from Kabkabiya,[11] and Mohamed Hadai Omer 'Degersho', a Mahariya from Malamat, south-west of Kabkabiya. After the first rebel attacks on army and police posts in 2002, the group was organized into a militia based in al Fasher, capital of North Darfur state, and known popularly as 'Hajjana', after the camel corps that was one of the original five divisions of Sudan's pre-independence army.[12]

Khartoum's response to the rebellion was initially confused. Security officers saw the signs of an SPLA conspiracy to open a new front in western Sudan—to put pressure on government negotiators at the North–South peace talks then under way in Kenya—and called community leaders to meetings in Darfur and Khartoum, where they offered them arms to fight the rebels. But Darfur's Arabs were themselves victims of government neglect, and the immediate response of many was lukewarm. Some argued the government had enough power to face the rebels alone. The governor of North Darfur, Gen. Suliman Ibrahim, also opposed the use of militias. Seeking to decrease tension, by

curtailing militia activity, in August 2002 he arrested the three tribal leaders he considered the most troublesome—including Sheikh Musa Hilal Abdalla (see Box 1), *nazir* (paramount chief) of the Mahamid Arabs of North Darfur, the largest section of the Northern Rizeigat—and sent them across the country to prison in Port Sudan.[13]

A defining moment for the counterinsurgency came on 25 April 2003, when a combined force of SLA and JEM drove into al Fasher with one SPG-9 rocket launcher, one *doshka* (DShK) machine gun, and one 120 mm anti-aircraft gun captured from the Sudan army, and destroyed every plane parked in the military zone of the airport—two Antonovs, cargo planes used to drop crude,

Box 1 **Who is Musa Hilal?**

From his earliest youth, Musa Hilal was a controversial figure, considered 'quarrelsome' and 'disobedient' even in primary school. But it was precisely because of his strong character that Mahamid elders—*omdas,* religious leaders, and intellectuals—selected him to replace his father as *nazir* in 1985, aged only 26, preferring him to his quiet older brother, 'Gerji', and a cousin, Izhaq.

Musa Hilal claims direct authority over 300,000 Mahamid in North Darfur, and says he enjoys the 'respect' of another 200,000 in South Darfur. First on the US State Department's list of suspected war criminals in Darfur, and target of a UN Security Council financial and travel ban imposed for reportedly obstructing peace, he was appointed special adviser to the Ministry of Federal Affairs in January 2008—a month after mooting the idea of joining an SPLA-convened meeting of Darfurian rebels in Juba (Flint and de Waal, 2008).

As much as a signal that Khartoum did not intend to sacrifice Darfur's Arabs to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Hilal's appointment was seen as an attempt to keep an unpredictable, independent-minded proxy under closer watch. Hilal first ran into trouble with officialdom in December 1989, when the regional Security Committee in al Fasher decided unanimously to suspend him from the sheikhdom of the Mahamid, accusing him, in the words of then governor Tijani Sese, of 'inciting tribal hatred and conflict'. Thirteen years later, Gen. Suliman sent him out of Darfur for the same reason, using tax evasion as a pretext.

Darfur's Arabs like strong leaders, and Musa Hilal reportedly crushes tin cans with his teeth when he wants to impress. But he is controversial even among Arabs. To some, he is a criminal, responsible for new pressures on nomadic life and abuses that dishonour the tribe. To others, he is an Arab champion. Although Arabs constitute about a third of Darfur's population, Abbala are a small minority in the areas in which they are present and, with only two members in the 450-member National Assembly, have never formed a political force powerful enough to put their needs on anyone's agenda. When Musa Hilal took up arms, some say, Darfur's Arabs become impossible to ignore.

shrapnel-loaded bombs, and five helicopter gunships. The SPLA had not inflicted such a loss on the air force in more than 20 years' war in the South. The rebels killed more than 70 troops and technicians, captured more than 30 others including the commander of the air force, Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Bushra Ismail, and seized more weapons than they could transport—among them, 106 mm and 120 mm mortars, four SPG-9s, 11 anti-aircraft guns, and one 'Rubai', a Soviet-made anti-aircraft system designed to shoot aircraft, particularly helicopters or low-flying airplanes, but devastatingly effective against trucks and light armour as well. They went in with 13 vehicles—and left with 18.[14]

The attack changed everything. Darfur's war was no longer a little local trouble; it had struck at the heart of the government's military power. Khartoum dismissed Gen. Suliman and insisted publicly that the insurgency was the work of 'outlaws'. Privately, however, it determined to crush the rebels and anyone who sympathized with them.

Musa Hilal had been moved to house arrest in Khartoum four months earlier and, furious with the government, had made contact with a close associate of SLA chairman Abdel Wahid Mohamed al Nur, an Arab lawyer called Hafiz Yousif. At a series of meetings in the Khartoum offices of the Tijaniyya Sufi sect, the largest Moslem sect in Darfur,[15] Hilal told a Tijaniyya leader from Algeria that he would fight against the government unless released from house arrest.[16] But as the insurgents attempted to feed their growing armies, Zaghawa rebels stole camels belonging to his Um Jalul clan. Released from house arrest in June 2003, reportedly at the urging of Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and former North Darfur governor Gen. Abdalla Safi al Nur, he agreed to help organize the counterinsurgency (see Box 2).

Little more than a month after returning to Darfur, Hilal telephoned Hafiz Yousif and told him he had met the governors of North and South Darfur, Osman Kibr and al Haj Atta al Mannan. 'Join us!' Yousif remembers him saying. 'We have money if you want it. The Arab problem is with the Zaghawa. For this reason Arabs are joining the government.'[17]

Military Intelligence officers and senior NCP officials travelled to Darfur to oversee recruitment and compensation of the militias, and to support and coordinate with Chadian rebels seeking the overthrow of the Darfur rebels' external patron, Chadian President Idriss Déby. Maj. Gen. al Hadi Adam Hamid,

Box 2 **The experience of the Darok**

In 2003, two weeks after the rebels attacked al Fasher, three Military Intelligence officers from Kabkabiya visited elders of the small Darok tribe in North Darfur and, in separate meetings with them, offered them arms and 40 days' training in Kabkabiya to fight the rebels.[18] One tribal leader was offered 95 AK-47s and told, 'Take guns. Then you will get salaries, and then cars.' The salary mentioned was SDP 75,000 (USD 30) per month, one-quarter of the amount paid to the Border Guards in Misteriha.

Military Intelligence combined incentives with fear, telling the Darok, 'The rebels are close—and they are armed. You must protect yourselves!'

The Darok enjoyed good relations with the Fur of the area, fellow farmers who were generally supportive of the insurgency. But their immediate neighbours included the powerful Um Jalul of Musa Hilal to the east and the fiercely pro-government Gimr to the north-west, and some of those contacted agreed to arm their kinsmen to fight. Others refused, however, telling the Military Intelligence officers the government had never heeded their requests for services, schools, and water. On the contrary, they said, Khartoum had imposed crushing taxes on them.

On 26 June, six weeks after the attempt to recruit the Darok, hundreds of camel-mounted militiamen firing AK-47s and followed by regular troops travelling in trucks attacked the recalcitrant Darok area north of Kabkabiya in a four-day operation eyewitnesses say was supported by three helicopter gunships. The Darok claim that Musa Hilal himself supervised the operation from the village of Karazawiya, north-west of Kabkabiya. Twelve people including five who were praying in the mosque were killed in the first village attacked, Sireaf Humaro. The village was then looted and burned.

After this, the attackers spread across all Darok areas. Darok leaders say the offensive claimed 120 lives and displaced approximately 60 per cent of the tribe. They believe it was 'punishment for refusing to join the janjaweed'.[19]

who had been posted in Southern Sudan, liaised with the militias from Khartoum. (Some Arab sources suggest that Maj. Gen. Hamid was selected for this role in hope that he could mobilize his own Beni Hussein tribe, which, under the leadership of his brother, Nazir el Ghadi Adam Hamid, was recommending neutrality in the conflict.) Another Military Intelligence officer, Musa Abdalla al Bashir, coordinated the cross-border activities of the 'janjaweed' with the operations of the Chadian rebels and, when necessary, with the Sudanese military. He provided support to the Chadian rebels and training for Chadian and Darfurian militias.[20] The two groups usually maintained separate camps but occasionally came into proximity to receive specialized training or launch operations.[21]

The mobilization was supported at different levels of local government—from governors down to commissioners—and by institutions including the paramilitary Popular Defence Forces (PDF) (see Box 3). The chain of command reached from the highest-level national leader in Khartoum to the smallest administrative units in the three states of Darfur (HRW, 2005, p. 3).

As the mobilization gathered momentum, the character of the militias changed. In the Masalit wars in West Darfur in the 1990s (Flint and de Waal, 2008, pp. 56–66), and in the first flush of the counterinsurgency in 2003, the government sought recruits for the PDF and *mujahideen* (holy warriors).[22] But service in Islamist militias was rewarded with war booty—not salaries—and the largely uneducated, impoverished Abbala who formed the backbone of the counterinsurgency wanted cash, not ideology. Thus a small and little-known division of the army, the Border Guards, traditionally composed of mounted units (*al wahda al ragba*), became the main vehicle for mobilization. Centred in Misteriha, 35 kilometres from the army garrison of Kabkabiya, it provided salaries of SDP 300,000 (USD 117) per month.[23]

The Hajjana were put under Musa Hilal's orders and sent to Misteriha, under the supervision of two senior officers in Military Intelligence—Lt. Col. Abdel Wahid Saeed Ali Saeed as overall commander and Lt. Col. Abdel Rahim Abdalla Mohamed as chief of operations. These two took their orders from Maj. Gen. Hamid, who was reported to have the dual role of coordinating the integration of tribal militias into army operations when necessary and disbursing money to tribal leaders to help them maintain fealty within the tribe.[24] Degersho became one of Musa Hilal's bodyguards, sowing the seeds of a tribal rivalry that would become a critical factor in the disintegration of government control over the militias. From Misteriha, helicopters carried arms, ammunition, and food to militia camps, including in the Arab *damrat* (settlements) around the town of Kutum, between the Fur rebels in Jebel Marra to the south and Dar Zaghawa to the north.[25]

When they operated alone, the paramilitaries were generally armed only with the small arms with which pastoralists were familiar—old M-14 rifles known as 'Mengistus', AK-47s, and G3s. When they fought with the army, they were given heavy weapons for the duration of operations, but were required to return them after.[26] They were permitted to keep any guns they seized,

Box 3 **Organs of integration**

Young men armed by the government to combat the insurgency have been incorporated into military and paramilitary groups for a variety of reasons, but increasingly to attempt to enforce a degree of control over them and to satisfy demands for salaries and other benefits. In September 2008, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights said the groups 'continue to commit violations and no efforts have been made to control or disarm them' (UNHRC, 2008).

Military groups

Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). The militarization and organization of nomadic tribes has attracted the attention of central powers from the time of the Mahdi, whose shock troops were the Baggara Arabs of Darfur and Kordofan. Darfurian Arabs complain that the Bashir government denies them senior rank in the army, despite their role in the counterinsurgency, in part because of the historic memory of their bad track record in northern Sudan. Many senior SAF officers dislike the militias, believing that their indiscipline rubs off on regular soldiers.[27]

Central Reserve Police (CRP). A gendarmerie officially under the Interior Ministry, although more likely at the behest of the National Intelligence and Security Service of Salah Gosh, the CRP has become increasingly active in the conflict in Darfur (and neighbouring Kordofan). Some analysts believe this is a result of the reduced effectiveness of the Popular Defence Forces, a paramilitary group that has taken on a political dimension that makes it more useful as a political rallying tool than a fighting force; others link it to restrictions imposed on SAF by the Darfur Peace Agreement. In 2004, the CRP opened a training centre in Musa Hilal's Misteriha barracks in North Darfur.

Paramilitary groups

Popular Defence Forces (PDF). Formed as a legal entity by decree in November 1989, five months after the National Islamic Front seized power, the PDF regularized tribal militias into paramilitaries and enforced Islamist national service for all citizens. Active in Southern Sudan against the SPLA until the civil war in the South ended in 2005, and in West Darfur during the Masalit wars of the late 1990s, it was one of the initial vehicles for mobilization in Darfur.

Popular Police. An Islamist force drawn mainly from Rizeigat.

Border Guards. Virtually unknown before the Darfur war, the Border Guards have structures and organization similar to those of regular military units and are theoretically controlled by Military Intelligence. All units are commanded by SAF officers. The most active unit in 2003–04 was based in Misteriha, composed mainly of Northern Rizeigat and with a rapid intervention group under Musa Hilal's command called 'The Quick and Horrible Forces'.[28]

Nomadic police. Camel-mounted police under the Interior Ministry, operating exclusively along animal migration routes.

but had to hand all heavy weapons to the army.[29] Senior commanders enjoyed a large degree of autonomy from the official security apparatus and were not accountable to local security authorities, including the police.

The government initially denied any connection to or cooperation with the 'janjaweed', describing them as 'bandits'. As evidence of cooperation mounted, however, officials acknowledged asking Darfurians 'to help in protecting themselves against the rebellion' and said this was 'standard practice' in Sudan (IRIN, 2004). But they continued to deny operational links with the militias—not only in early attacks in 2003, when irregulars often went out in advance of army units, but also in later attacks, including a massive 'road-clearing' offensive in South Darfur in 2004, when militias were fully integrated into battle formations.[30]

A mountain of evidence contradicted the government claims. Documents obtained by Human Rights Watch demonstrated an official policy of cooperation with the militias—from 'allowing' their activities and 'securing their vital needs' to 'providing them with sufficient armoury' and opening new camps 'to protect civilians in major cities'. The documents also spoke of impunity: local officials were urged to tolerate 'minor' abuses of civilians (HRW, 2004a).

Manipulating Arab insecurities, Khartoum played on fears that the rebels, and the Zaghawa especially, had a grand plan to push Arabs from Darfur. '[North Darfur governor] Osman Kibr and [his South Darfur counterpart] al Haj Atta al Mannan brought Arab chiefs and told them the rebellion was against Arabs, not the government,' said a prominent North Darfur Arab. 'The government had to use everything in the box—including weapons, money, fear, and threats—because the army couldn't fight. The NIF destroyed the professional army.'[31]

As in Southern Sudan, where the government sought to employ divide-and-rule tactics using non-Arab proxies, Khartoum's mobilization was not at first uniquely 'Arab'. The first irregulars accepted for training in al Fasher were a mixed group and included several hundred members of the Tunjur tribe from the Kutum area. Although closely related to the Fur, the Tunjur enjoyed fairly good relations with Arab communities around Kutum and after 45 days' training were given AK-47s and sent back to their communities.[32] But most leaders of the main rebel tribes—the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa—refused to mobilize

their people, deepening the polarization between pro-government and pro-rebel tribes.[33] When Arab and Masalit village leaders were asked to identify volunteers in West Darfur in June 2003, Arabs were accepted and armed—but Masalit were turned away (Flint and de Waal, 2008, p. 126).

The ethnic divide widened in August 2003 after many of the Tunjur who had been trained in al Fasher joined the rebels in an attack on Kutum.[34] Northern Rizeigat leaders accused the rebels of having targeted Arabs, and many put new effort into mobilization (see Box 4).[35] In the 1980s, many of Darfur's Arabs had been armed, including with an agenda of Arab domination, as the Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi sought to establish an 'Arab belt' across Africa. Gaddafi's chosen intermediaries in Darfur were the Um Jalul of Musa Hilal's father, Sheikh Hilal Abdalla (Flint and de Waal, 2008, pp. 33–70). The poverty that made a new generation of Abbala vulnerable to militarization 20 years later has been well documented.[36] Less well documented have been the attacks on Arabs—the looting of camel herds and attacks on buses, villages, settlements, and *feriks* (nomadic camps)—that convinced many that the rebellion was in essence anti-Arab.

Although the SLA manifesto urged Arabs to join the insurgency, the rebellion was launched without consultation with Arab tribal leaders in Darfur. Rumours spread like wildfire through the marketplaces of Darfur of a shadowy movement called harakat FAZAM—the Fur–Zaghawa–Masalit movement—that was planning to drive all Arabs out of Darfur.[37]

The calculus of Arab leaders was more complex, involving both short- and long-term reckoning. The British colonial administration had recognized *dars* (homelands) for almost all of Darfur's sedentarized groups, including the great Baggara (cattle-herding) Arab tribes of South Darfur, but had left the Abbala dependant on customary land use rights, which drought, desertification, and increasing inter-communal violence had placed under tremendous strain. Some Arab leaders now wanted land for their people. (The Arab tribes with *dars*—the Beni Hussein of North Darfur, and the Baggara of South Darfur: the Southern Rizeigat, Habbaniya, Beni Halba, and Ta'aisha—all attempted to remain neutral and most of their tribal leaders refused to participate in the counterinsurgency.) Others were seduced by promises of money and power for themselves—disregarding concerns about the possible consequences,

Box 4 **The changing face of Misteriha**

In March 2004, Omda Khidir Ali Abdel Rahman was arrested in the village of Tur in Jebel Marra, accused of helping the rebels, and imprisoned in Misteriha. His family was told he would be released upon payment of SDP 10 million (USD 4,000). He described the camp:

> Helicopters came two to three times a week, carrying weapons, ammunition, and money. The salary for the soldiers was SPD 350,000 [USD 137], but they only received SPD 200,000 [USD 78] because the officers creamed off the top. Prisoners who were educated read the slips for them. They were angry when they found out they were being cheated.
>
> The janjaweed bosses were Kaddada, Degersho, Zakaria Ismael, Omar Hilal, Saleh Gazzaz, and Makkawi, who died in Disa. There were five army officers. Lt. Col. Abdel Wahid Saeed Ali Saeed organized logistics, money, and administration. Leaders of the Western Area Command in al Fasher visited. Al Hadi Hamid and Safi al Nur stayed four days, and brought money.
>
> In 2004, two camps were organized. One was run by the Central Reserve Police, with three months' weapons training for 200–250 men each time. Some went on to further training in Khartoum and, we heard, in Syria, too. The other camp was under the army. The training here lasted only one month and was without weapons, for 150–200 men at a time.
>
> There were three types of janjaweed:
>
> 1. Border Guards, with military IDs and salaries. They were the elite.
> 2. PDF. They were given uniforms, guns, ammunition, and food, but had no salaries. They got SPD 100,000 [USD 39] for every operation they went on.
> 3. *Mustanfareen* [reserves]. They were recruited by force and given uniforms but no salary. If they refused, they were fined five camels or put in jail.
>
> When I arrived the janjaweed were living under trees and in *rakubas* [open-sided thatched shelters]. The prisoners were made to build houses, and beaten if we refused. By the time I escaped, in March 2005, the camp had electricity, tents, and television.[38]

especially given the interdependence of nomads and farmers (Young et al., 2009, p. 57).[39]

By 2009, with three arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged government war criminals,[40] many Arab leaders were trying to disassociate themselves from the government by claiming that they took up arms in 2003 only for self-defence. Although the military threat they faced in 2003 was generally less serious than their depiction of it, especially in those areas where Arabs were already armed, there is no doubt that Arab

tribes felt targeted—including with weapons they say they had never before seen in Darfur.[41]

Not all tribes supported the mobilization, however. The *nazir* of the Mahariya, Mohamadein al Dud Hassaballa, refused to accept arms despite the often-abusive behaviour of SLA rebels in Ghreir, the Mahariya heartland in North Darfur. Before the conflict, the Mahariya had enjoyed generally good relations, including marriage, with Zaghawa in Ghreir. With the rebellion, however, unknown Zaghawa began arriving in Ghreir, including from Chad, and Mahariya say the area became 'an armed camp'. The rebels harassed Mahariya women. They abducted and imprisoned a Mahariya elder, Sheikh Mughani Abdalla, and demanded a ransom of ten camels. Nazir Mohamadein still refused to react and instead ordered all Mahariya to leave for Kabkabia, with their animals. His passivity was criticized even by his own relatives—one of whom, a Khartoum university graduate named Atuhami Mohamed Jeed, died in combat after returning to Darfur to fight the rebels—and many young Mahariya men joined the Border Guards of their own volition, against his wishes, 'to defend their families'.[42]

Al Dud's refusal to arm his tribe prompted government officials to reduce the salaries of all Mahariya working in security offices in al Fasher—from SDP 350,000 (USD 136) to SDP 75,000 (USD 30) a month. Soon after, they fired them, reportedly suspecting collusion between Mahariya and Zaghawa. When the Mahariya complained, al Dud said, 'Have you been sent by Security? I have only one thing to say. Go back to your old jobs. I am a civilian, not responsible for fighting the rebellion. I am not going to kill my people for nothing!'[43]

In South Darfur, the only one of Darfur's three states with an Arab majority, most tribal leaders opted for caution when the government asked for fighters. Despite sustaining heavy losses in Southern Sudan, the *murahaliin* had not been acknowledged as official organs of the armed forces and, with few exceptions, had not been remunerated. As one Southern Rizeigat leader said, 'We were always on the frontline, but received no reward.'

Summoned to Khartoum in 2003, Rizeigat Nazir Saeed Madibu told President Bashir, 'I will give you my sons to fight in the army, but not one for the PDF. You are not in this chair forever. But the Rizeigat are here forever—and revenge will continue forever.'[44] The government tried to undermine Madibu by recruiting rival sections of the Rizeigat—most importantly, the Shattiya

clan of Foreign Trade Minister Abdel Hamid Musa Kasha.[45] As Madibu persisted in his neutrality and attempted to build an Arab consensus in South Darfur, warning that his northern cousins would regret their role in the war, the government also manipulated local government and the tribal hierarchy of the native administration to diminish his authority. In 2004 it gave a nazirship to the Ma'alia, the largest tribe hosted in Dar Rizeigat, and in 2007 carved a new local administrative unit, Bahr al Arab, out of Madibu's land.[46]

When the *nazir* of the Beni Halba, al Hadi Issa Dabaka, refused to commit the Beni Halba as he had in 1991, government officials bought the support of one of his rivals. In 2004, Musa Kasha and Gov. Atta al Manan visited Id el Fursan, the Beni Halba capital, publicly praised those who had taken up arms against the wishes of al Hadi, and gave the militia SDP 100 million (USD 39,000) and SDP 10 million (USD 3,900), respectively.[47]

In South Darfur the government's concern was twofold: to defend the state capital, Nyala, and to contain the rebels in Jebel Marra. As in North Darfur, Khartoum's most important allies were Abbala—Mahamid, including Um Jalul around Tur and Gorne[48]; the semi-nomadic Nawaiba, the second-largest section of the Rizeigat, around Nyertiti and Zalingei; and Mahariya, the third-largest Rizeigat section, including the Hamdania of Abdalla Mustafa 'Abu Noba'[49] and the Awlad Mansour of Juma Dogolo, north-west of Nyala.[50] Military Intelligence exploited every opportunity that presented itself. Juma Dogolo's nephew Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo, popularly known as 'Hemeti', a camel trader before the war, was approached after Zaghawa rebels attacked one of his caravans, stealing 3,400 animals, he claimed, and kidnapping 77 people including 10 of his own relatives. After agreeing to military training, Hemeti was entrusted with area security for Nyala.[51]

The Terjem, agro-pastoralists who had lived peacefully with the Fur in Wadi Bulbul west of Nyala, enrolled in the PDF and Popular Police with the blessing of their *nazir*, Mohamed Yacoub Ibrahim. 'At the time the Border Guards were still weak, and after Fasher we feared an attack on Nyala,' a Terjem leader said. 'The Terjem closed the roads around Terjem villages, and between Jebel Marra and Nyala, and stood by to defend Nyala.'[52] In recognition of their service in the police, the Terjem had been granted a nazirate and an administration in 1992. Now they wanted a *dar* of their own (Takana, 2008, pp. 18–19).[53]

The government also armed smaller tribes like the Gimr, Tama, and Kinin, Arabized groups that mobilized their people for reasons of identity as well as strategy, and Arabs such as the Salamat and the Saada,[54] who were relative newcomers from Chad, in need of land. The NIF had begun creating similar chieftaincies among tribes almost as soon as it took power in 1989, aiming to create constituencies that would give it votes if elections ever became necessary. In 2003 the government called in its debts, demanding that the chiefs provide military backing.

By 2009, many Arabs active in the counterinsurgency were rewriting history, to some degree, and blaming the worst of the abuses of 2003–04 on these smaller tribes—whom they called 'the Arabs of 2002', the year of the first rebel attacks.[55] In this category many included Ali Kushayb, the militia leader indicted by the ICC in March 2007, noting that he was of mixed parentage—Arab Ta'aisha on one side but on the other Borgo, a section of the Maba people of eastern Chad who are scattered across West Darfur, without a *dar*.

'Ali Kushayb killed so many to prove he was more Arab than the Arabs,' an advocate for the nomads said. 'The Arabs of 2002—Kinin, Goraan, Hotiya, Tama, northern Gimr—have brought a big problem for the real Arabs!'[56]

Provocation and revenge

At the end of 2004, with the SLA already splitting along tribal lines, a multi-fronted government offensive in North Darfur pushed the aggressive Zaghawa fighters of Minni Minawi south. In the 1970s and 1980s, hardship and famine had driven hundreds of thousands of Zaghawa civilians out of North Darfur, and in the intervening years they had been given omdaships[57] in parts of South Darfur where they nevertheless remained dependent on paramount chiefs with land titles. The Zaghawa enjoyed generally good relations with their hosts. But the overbearing behaviour of Minawi's men, their abuses and heavy 'taxes', changed this in many areas, strengthening the perception that the Zaghawa now wanted independent chiefdoms and lands of their own.[58]

SLA attacks on Arabs prompted ruthless and wholly disproportionate reprisals, facilitated by the government's willingness to supply arms and other 'vital needs'.[59] 'The Zaghawa were stupid,' a civil society activist said. 'They mobilized the tribes immediately.'

In 2004, Zaghawa attacked Missiriya villages: first Taisha, north-west of Labado, in May 2004, and then Nitega, seat of Nazir Tijani Abdel Gadir, on 27 June, damaging the local council, Nazir Tijani's court, and scrawling 'SLA' on the walls. After a second attack on 28 June, the police evacuated to Nyala, numbering too few to protect even themselves, and the Missiriya defended themselves with personal weapons. Nazir Tijani subsequently accepted small arms and *doshkas* from the government and sent 120 young men for training as Border Guards.[60]

'We were afraid that unless we stood together we would be finished,' a Missiriya elder said. 'The movements stopped fighting the government. If you were an Arab they would seize you on the road. If you were not Arab, you could go anywhere.'[61]

Devastating Missiriya attacks, on Hamada and Khor Abeche in 2005 and Karamagay in 2006, were denounced by senior African Union and UN officials and criticized internationally for the terrible violence inflicted on civilians. There was almost no criticism, however, of the more than 50 attacks that Missiriya leaders say killed more than 305 civilians in the first two years of the war and left more than 20 Missiriya villages and *feriks* burned 'with weapons never seen before'.

'The tragedy of the Missiriya got no international attention at all,' said Mohamed Abdalla Abu Sakkin, head of the Missiriya council of South Darfur, who lost four brothers in a single SLA attack in November 2004. 'The Missiriya area was surrounded by Zaghawa. It became a big camp. All schools stopped in 2005. Unless you were in one of four areas—Taisha, Ben Jedid, Nitega, or Merer—you would not find anyone to defend you, for at least three years.'

Most Missiriya lived in the *dar* of the Birgid, one of the largest non-Arab tribes of South Darfur, and accused Birgid leaders of supporting the rebels. After reconciling with the Birgid in June 2005, the Missiriya withdrew from the war as a tribe (although individuals continued to participate). As so often in Darfur, local politics trumped 'racial' identity.

III. The Arab mutiny

Disenchantment and fragmentation

The government offensive of December 2003–January 2004 crushed the SLA in North Darfur, the cradle of the rebellion, and left the rebels in disarray, splintering into tribal factions and fighting among themselves. With the immediate military threat posed by the rebellion controlled, the government changed its strategy. According to senior Western officers, 300 young men handpicked from the Border Guards and PDF were sent for advanced infantry training by Sudanese and Russian officers at a Military Intelligence camp north of Omdurman. After their return to Darfur in mid-2005 as trainers for the militias, the army, which had led the great combined offensives of 2003–04, took a back seat.[62]

Although on the front line of the war, Darfur's Arabs were absent from the peace talks under way in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, except as very rare members of the government and rebel delegations. Concerned that the government was not representing their interests, and increasingly aware that pastoralist communities could not survive without farming groups, the rural markets they enabled, and the support services they gave to livestock migration, a ten-man delegation attempted to join the talks in October 2005—but was turned away.[63] The delegation warned that Arabs would reject any agreement that did not 'involve all Darfur citizens, particularly those who have suffered much from the rebels' (NPDF, 2005).

The Darfur Peace Agreement signed in Abuja on 5 May 2006 confirmed the Arabs' suspicions that the government would sacrifice their interests to ensure its own political survival. The agreement committed Khartoum not only to 'neutralize and disarm the Janjaweed/armed militias' as a first step to peace, but also to accept 5,000 rebels into the regular army, including as officers, with special (but unspecified) training for another 3,000 (DPA, 2006). At the age of just 34, Minni Minawi, the Arabs' most bitter enemy and the only rebel leader to sign the DPA, became senior assistant to the president.

The question of land ownership lay at the heart of the continuing conflict, and on this issue, too, the DPA was perceived to disadvantage pastoralists. It recognized the traditional system of tribal land domains which the landless Abbala had the greatest interest in reforming, preferring modern law that would cement their war gains and give them legal access to pastureland and farmland. Pastoralism was mentioned in only one paragraph of the 99-page agreement, with a passing reference to the 'important problem' of competition for pasture and water. Nomadic migration was seen through a security lens, with no acknowledgement of the need for development and services along migration routes that had been determined decades earlier, before drought, desertification, conflict, and population movement changed the resource map of Darfur.

Abbala began talking of 'betrayal'. Some claimed that because of the loss of livestock, migration routes, and trade, they were suffering more than IDPs who were receiving international aid in camps. Migration to the north was hampered by rebel presence, especially in the Nyala–al Fasher corridor, and the north-western routes to Libya and Egypt were cut. Livestock were confined in relatively small areas, and conflicts over grazing lands were degenerating into bloody clashes—both among nomads and with farmers.[64]

'When there is peace, the government ignores the janjaweed,' said Mohamed es Sayed of the nomadic NGO Masar.[65]

Darfur's two most powerful Border Guard commanders—in North Darfur, Mahamid chief Musa Hilal; in South Darfur, the newly emerging Mahariya strongman, Hemeti—began hedging their bets and entered into secret talks with JEM through intermediaries, perhaps hoping that an alliance with their victims might save them from the ICC (see Box 5). In March 2006, Hemeti signed a mutual non-aggression agreement with JEM. Two months later, exactly 15 days after the DPA was signed, Musa Hilal did the same.[66] A JEM official said Hilal was 'in a bad position because the government cannot support him directly'. He was too notorious.

As government support for Hilal faltered, and his relationship with Khartoum was criticized for bringing the Northern Rizeigat into disrepute without lasting benefits, paramilitaries began to desert. Many accused their leaders of corruption in monopolizing military jobs and benefits (Young et al., 2009, p. 78). Without a clear political agenda, the defectors lacked the cohesiveness and

Box 5 **Militia-rebel agreements**

Beginning in the second half of 2005, as concern over the Abuja process grew, local militias and paramilitaries, including Border Guards, both explored the possibility of agreements with rebel groups, seeing only more destruction in continued conflict. The agreements reached ranged from military alliances with the SLA to non-aggression pacts with JEM, and included:

Between SLA–Abdel Wahid and:

- Rizeigat from al Da'ein led by Ali Aridala and Omda Abdalla Hassan. Signed in Wadi Toro in August 2005, when the Rizeigat had an estimated 35,000 camels trapped between al Da'ein and Nyala.[67] The agreement established a joint market for farmers and nomads and enabled rainy-season migration to Jebel Marra for the first time in three years.[68]
- Mahamid and Mahariya militia led by al Nur Omar, Hamoda Hassan, and Jibril Saga. The agreement enabled a second joint market. Signed in Sabanga, Jebel Marra, in December 2006.
- Mahamid and Mahariya militia led by Ali Abundigat, formerly under Musa Hilal. An initial group of 50 men with camels, small arms, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) grew to 250 by the end of 2007 and was fully integrated into the SLA in pursuit of demands for security and services for nomads, including hospitals and schools. Based south-west of Guldo, near Nyertiti, the Arabs were assigned to protect the south-western flank of Jebel Marra.[69]
- Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo, 'Hemeti'. Signed after weeks of negotiations that began on 5 June 2007, a month after the death of Degersho, the agreement provided for enhanced security in areas under the parties' control, unhindered access to civilian and humanitarian goods and services, action to prevent attacks on civilians and internationals, and a commitment to work towards political and military unification. Hemeti says Abdel Wahid asked him for weapons, but he refused.[70]

Between JEM and:

- Hemeti and Badreddine Abbas al Nur Ator. A mutual non-aggression agreement, signed in Abeche, Chad, on 23 March 2006.
- Musa Hilal. A non-aggression agreement, signed in Adre, Chad, on 20 May 2006 after six months of negotiations conducted largely through Musa Hilal's brother, Mohamed Hassan Hilal, a lawyer based in the Gulf, and JEM chairman Khalil Ibrahim's brother Jibril, formerly based in the Gulf. The two reportedly met twice in West Darfur. JEM sources close to the negotiations said Musa Hilal complained that the government was not supporting Arab demands for land rights.[71]

organization to form a common front. Some operated as mercenary groups, selling their services to the highest bidder and/or engaging in banditry; some made alliances with the rebels, often more as a short-term strategy to win concessions or resources from the government than out of any political conviction; others drifted into armed groups that political activists were forming to demand independent representation for Arabs in any new peace talks.

The first Arab rebel group, the Popular Forces Army (PFA)[72] of Salah Mohamed Abdel Rahman, 'Abu Sura', a leftist veteran from the Shattiya clan of Abdel Hamid Musa Kasha, found little internal support and no external patron—only a single vehicle given Abu Sura personally by President Déby.[73] Abdel Wahid had contacted Abu Sura in 2001, telling him, 'We are making a revolution for all Darfurians', and several SLA factions promised him weapons after he announced his movement in December 2006 (PFA, 2006). But they did not deliver, and his followers, mainly PDF and Border Guards from Assalaya west of al Da'ein, were soon associated with carjacking and attacks on police and army posts as they attempted to provide for themselves.

A second group formed in mid-2007—the United Revolutionary Forces Front of Yassin Yousif, initially with Abu Sura in the PFA—won wider support with a political platform including representation for Arabs in electoral constituencies proportional to their statistical weight; adherence to the humanitarian principle of impartiality; the opening of all livestock migration routes, with measures to ensure safety along them; and the establishment of a special fund for the reconstruction and development of nomadic areas. At a meeting with Yassin Yousif in August 2006, Musa Hilal gave an assurance he would not attack fellow Arabs.[74] Yousif, an Ereigat from Kutum with a degree in economics from Juba University, said relations between Hilal and the government were 'bad'. Hilal headed a list of 'janjaweed' leaders drawn up by the US State Department and was 'afraid' of the government, fearing it might throw him to the ICC.

With Misteriha reorganized under a new commander from Military Intelligence, Col. Salah Mustafa,[75] the paramilitaries under Hilal's command were separated into tribal militias, each with its own camp and commanders paid directly by the army command in al Fasher. Tama reportedly moved to Um La'ota, Gimr to Um Shelil near Kabkabiya.[76] Degersho, who had established a direct relationship with Military Intelligence chief Awad Ibn Auf after trav-

elling to Khartoum to complain about discrimination against Mahariya in Misteriha, was allowed a separate brigade at Malamat, near the village of Saga south-west of Misteriha.[77] The brigade was composed principally of Mahariya, but included Baggara from the Hotiya, Terjem, Taalba, and Salamat tribes living in and around Jebel Marra.[78]

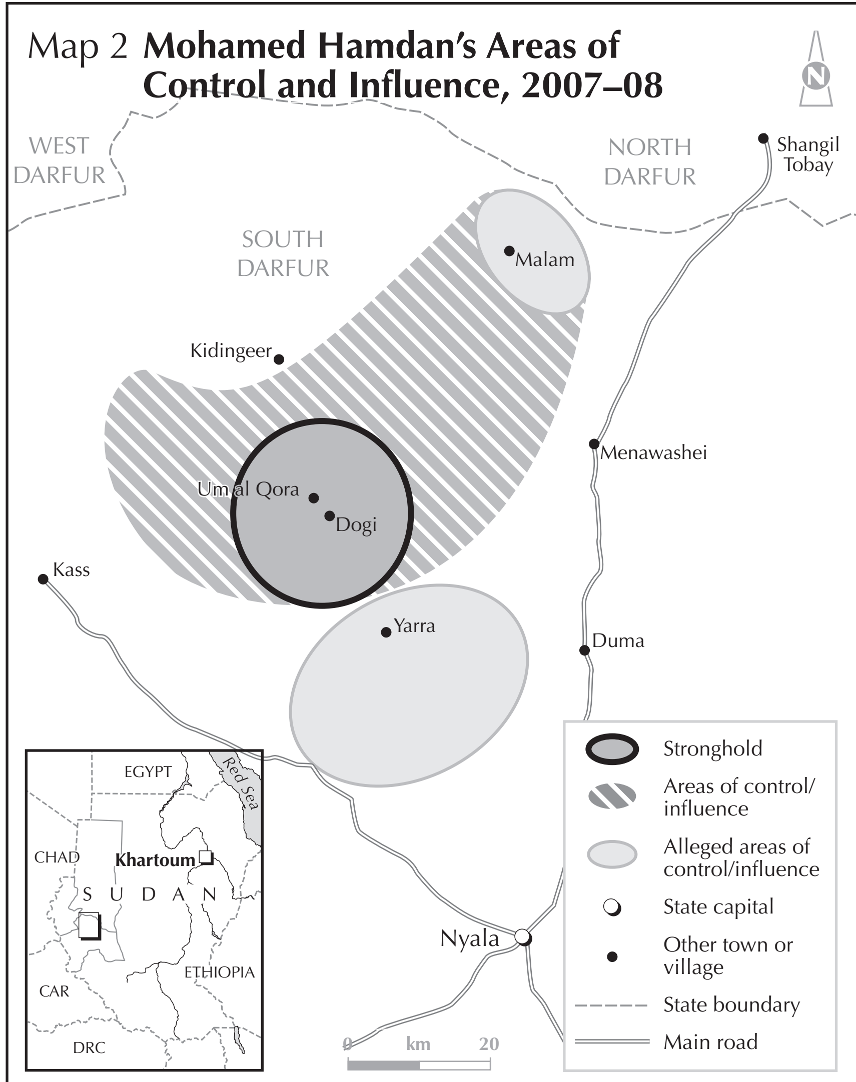
Speaking privately, some Mahamid leaders accuse the government of seeking to weaken Hilal by shifting resources to the Mahariya. Others speculate that Khartoum, with the ICC's eyes upon it, was simply trying to give its proxies a lower profile. The first thesis gained ground in September 2006 when Hemeti was summoned to Khartoum for two meetings with President Bashir and Defence Minister Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein. Apparently unaware of Hemeti's agreement with JEM, Bashir offered him weapons and cars to block a rebel offensive in North Darfur (Elbagir, 2004).[79] Hemeti accepted and moved north, combining government business with his own—a hunt across North Darfur for the Zaghawa commander who stole his camels in 2003.

In April 2007, tensions between Mahamid and Mahariya boiled over when Degersho was killed at a wedding party a few days after his men detained 12 of Musa Hilal's near Golo.[80] The Mahariya refused *diya* (blood money), rejecting claims that Degersho was killed accidentally, by celebratory gunfire, and demanded the life of Musa Hilal. As Mahariya elders sent women and children to safety in Kutum, Hemeti moved north to Malamat and threatened to take Degersho's brigade to the rebels in Jebel Marra unless Khartoum gave 500 of his men army salaries, paid compensation to the families of those killed in combat, and gave the Mahariya a nazirship and a *mahalliya* (locality), the basic unit of local government. Musa Hilal refused government mediation. He barricaded his compound with Toyota Land Cruisers and turned away a high-ranking government delegation that included Safi al Nur and Osman Kibr.[81]

In May 2007, the dispute appeared to be settled when Musa Hilal swore on the Koran that he had no hand in Degersho's death and Khartoum promised to support the Mahariya with 50 vehicles and USD 500,000. In the same month, Arab fears of betrayal surged again as the ICC issued its first two arrest warrants—including one for a militia leader, Ali Kushayb. In the event, Khartoum failed to make good on its promise of support, setting the stage for the greatest challenge to its authority in Darfur since the war began.

Hemeti's rebellion

Rumours that Hemeti had rebelled against the government began to circulate in August 2007 and were confirmed in October, when his men threatened to storm Nyala unless long-overdue salaries were paid. In November, Hemeti claimed to have formed an alliance with a new Arab rebel group, the Sudanese



Revolutionary Front (SRF), led by a computer engineer called Anwar Khater from the Awlad Eid branch of the Mahamid (Flint and de Waal, 2008, pp. 260–61). A statement put out in the name of the SRF, with Hemeti identified as 'commander in chief' and Khater as 'secretary general', said 'random' government bombardment would not deter the Arabs from 'continuing our rebellion to take our rights back'.[82]

Hemeti's defection, with at least 70 heavily armed vehicles, was the most significant shift in the military balance in Darfur since the conflict began. It stunned Khartoum. The Awlad Mansour had been one of the government's earliest proxies when the rebels first began to organize and in October 2002, supported by aerial bombardment, had attacked the village of Kidingeer, home of the most senior Fur elder to remain in rebel-controlled Jebel Marra, Shartai Suliman Hassaballa. Four years later, the Awlad Mansour were still participating in attacks against Jebel Marra with army and air force units (UNOHCHR, 2007, para. 12).

Calling his rebel movement Quwat al Wa'd al Sadiq (The Promise of Truth Forces), Hemeti said he was fighting for justice for Arabs. Interviewed in 2009, he said the main reason for his mutiny was the appointment of the Zaghawa Minni Minawi as senior adviser to the president.[83] Arabs who had fought with the government, by contrast, had not received their salaries, had not received compensation for their war dead and wounded, and had not been given health and veterinary services, schools, or water. Their livestock migration routes were still blocked by the rebels. Hemeti said his mutiny was well-planned, not spontaneous: he told the government he would participate in an offensive against SLA and JEM in the Haskanita area and when he received the logistics for the offensive—'large quantities' of vehicles, heavy weapons, communications equipment, money, and fuel—he jumped.

Originally from North Darfur, the Awlad Mansour branch of the Mahariya migrated to South Darfur at the end of the 1980s and settled in the Fur village of Dogi north-west of Nyala, calling it Um al Qora ('the Mother of all Villages'), one of the names of Mecca. Visitors to Hemeti's base near Um al Qora after his mutiny saw large quantities of Kalashnikovs, sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), Land Cruisers mounted with machine guns, anti-tank guns, multiple rocket launchers, anti-aircraft rockets, mortars, and 105 mm recoilless

rifles. The group had Thurayas and handheld radios not seen before with other rebel groups operating in Darfur.

Hemeti's rebellion was the greatest but not the only problem facing the government. Across Darfur in 2007, the piecemeal defections to the rebels that had begun in 2005 were superseded by larger movements of disaffected paramilitaries calling themselves the Jundi al Mazlum (The Wronged Soldiers). Although the name initially referred to a militia of uncertain allegiance in South Darfur, it became a catch phrase for all mutinous groupings as the Arab mutiny gained momentum. The Jundi's first main areas of operation were Kabkabiya and Zalingei, but they quickly spread to other parts of North and West Darfur. Their weapons were small arms. Lacking ammunition as their numbers grew, they attacked government convoys and police posts. Peace brokers made no attempt to engage the mutineers and many returned to the government as their financial grievances were addressed—but only for as long as they remained addressed.

In December 2007, Jundi staged a series of attacks against government convoys and security forces in the Zalingei area. The government felt so threatened that it withdrew all police and military detachments from rural areas and assigned them to the defence of Zalingei. Army salaries formerly transported by road were sent by air.[84]

Many of the mutinous Jundi were reported to have been recruited in 2006, after UN Security Council Resolution 1706 authorized the deployment of more than 20,000 UN peacekeepers to support the hard-pressed African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). [85] The government initially opposed the deployment of UN troops, fearing they might act as police for the ICC, and Military Intelligence reportedly prepared a plan to counter them through increased recruitment of tribal militias including the Beni Halba. As in 2003–04, fear and inducements were the recruiting tools: on one hand, government officials claimed that international troops would hold all Arabs responsible for the atrocities committed; on the other, they reportedly promised the Beni Halba social development and oil exploration (ICG, 2007, p. 3).

By 2007, Beni Halba had joined the Jundi.[86] So widespread were the mutinies, and the fragmentation, that in October 2007 the UN special envoy, Jan Eliasson, said the 'janjaweed' were no longer a discernible group (Reuters, 2007).

The return to the fold

By early 2008, Hemeti was back in the government fold, having found no alternative patrons. He was rebuffed by Libya, Chad, the UN, and the United States, and his attempts to join forces with the SRF were rejected by Anwar Khater, precipitating a split in Khater's movement. Hemeti also made overtures to the SLA, but said he found no strategic thinking—only 'self-interest' and a lack of leadership. Although he signed a 'memorandum of understanding' with the rebels in Jebel Marra, he said, Arab vehicles continued to be attacked on roads around the mountain. He stayed 'in the desert' for six months, supporting 4,000 men who began trickling back to their families, unopposed by him, as their isolation and lack of support became apparent.[87]

When his money ran out, Hemeti said, he had two choices: to rejoin the government, or become a 'janjaweed'—in Arab parlance, a robber.

Uncertainty still surrounds the exact terms of the deal under which Khartoum brought Hemeti back. Unconfirmed reports said he demanded, in addition to development for the Um al Qora area, the position of lieutenant general in the army for himself, a nazirship for his uncle Juma Dogolo, the post of commissioner for his brother Abdel Rahim Hamdan Dogolo, a cash payment of SDP 1 billion (USD 440,000) for himself, and half that amount again for his brother, ostensibly to compensate fighters and their families. UN informants said 3,000 of his men were incorporated into the regular army, with army salaries, and 200–300 were promised officer training. Colleagues said the deal had two main components—'money and weapons', including RPGs and machine guns. The entire package was conditional upon the return of four heavy weapons given in advance of the Haskanita offensive—two multiple rocket launchers and two ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns.[88]

Hemeti acknowledged returning the four weapons, saying this was 'the system': militia received heavy weapons from the army before offensives and returned them after. He denied asking for money and senior rank in the army, saying he could not expect a general's stars in his early 30s, and said he had been appointed 'coordinator between the Arab tribes and the government—like Musa Hilal'. He claimed that all he asked for was development. The government had promised schools and water, but not electricity, and was beginning to deliver.

Today, with Musa Hilal reported to be tightly controlled by Military Intelligence and considered 'less than reliable',[89] Hemeti is the single most powerful paramilitary leader in Darfur and the Mahariya are increasingly organized—including, by their own admission, in camps in Damrat Ghreir. Seeing little benefit from the agreement between Musa Hilal and the government, the terms of which they say are known only to Hilal and Safi al Nur, Mahariya leaders are pressing Hemeti to leave South Darfur and move back to North Darfur—to help the tribe enforce its claim to be the 'landowner' of a large area that extends north to the Libyan border.[90]

'In North Darfur Hemeti can have 100 points like Um al Qora,' a Mahariya elder in North Darfur said. 'All Mahariya will follow him.'

IV. 'The government has no control over the Arab tribes'[91]

Intra-Arab conflict

Hemeti's name may not have had any international resonance at the time, but his offensive in North Darfur in 2006 was clear evidence of the changing relationship between the government and the militias it had armed. In North Darfur, away from his own turf, Hemeti was fighting for his own reasons and, despite the presence of Military Intelligence and army officers, was the driving force. In the village of Wakheim, one of the principal watering stations for camels in the northern desert, he told locals, 'I am looking for 77 Arabs and camels. Are they dead or alive? You must answer. If you tell me I can help you!' His men were resupplied by a helicopter that delivered weapons, ammunition, and cigarettes, and when he found no trace of his camels he called up air strikes, saying, 'I am in Wakheim. I did not find the commander (blamed for stealing his animals). I caught some civilians and asked about the SLA. They didn't tell me. Libya supports these people. Send planes tomorrow!'[92] A soldier told a local man, apologetically, 'This is not our business. It is the janjaweed's!'[93]

As early as November 2004, UN special envoy Jan Pronk had warned, in a briefing to the Security Council, that 'the government does not control its own forces fully' (Pronk, 2004). By 2006, most militias had slipped the government's leash—except when it suited them. Having expected rewards they never received—land, salaries, employment and ranks in the army—and having seen the government make all the concessions in Abuja to the rebels, especially Minawi, the Arabs appeared to have concluded that the only way to get a better deal was to get it themselves. With rebel control of wide swathes of Darfur cutting livestock migration routes, caging pastoralists and their herds, Abbala and Baggara began fighting each other for, among other things, control of the land seized from settled farmers.[94] The strategy of giving administrative representation and allocating new localities to purchase tribal loyalty encouraged

land-grabbing by smaller tribes which, once they had chieftaincies, wanted a *dar* (Takana, 2008).

Although the 'genocide' narrative of 2003–04 persisted in much of the Western media and the powerful US activist lobby, about one-third of the violent fatalities in 2008 and early 2009 occurred in intra-Arab clashes, usually for land.[95]

Conflict between Arab tribes was nothing new. Until the mid-1980s, most of the wars that were fought in Darfur were mainly between Arabs. What was new was the intensity of the conflicts. With many communities heavily armed and well-trained, and using government assets including vehicles and weapons, small incidents quickly escalated into pitched battles in which the government 'looked like a third party'.[96] Human rights groups and activists tended to blame the conflicts on a government strategy of 'chaos by design' and accused the government of encouraging the fighting, including with weapons.[97] Senior AMIS commanders disagreed. 'The government is no longer arming the janjaweed,' said Col. James Oladipo, the AMIS commander in South Darfur, as fighting raged between agro-pastoralist Terjem and nomadic Mahariya (Gettleman, 2007).

The Terjem–Mahariya war, the first and one of the fiercest of the intra-Arab wars, began in January 2007 when Abbala including Hemeti's Border Guards attacked the Terjem in Wadi Bulbul.[98] UN informants initially said government 'passivity' indicated a strategy of 'keeping the conflict ongoing even when it can stop it'. But a later evaluation concluded that the government was powerless to stop the fighting, which came within 15 kilometres of Nyala, and said support for the militias was primarily tribal. A cow purchased one AK-47, a Mahariya informant said; a camel bought two.

'The government didn't support either side,' one UN analyst said. He added:

> *It used helicopter gunships to try to stop it, but failed. It tried to separate the two sides three times, but was unable to. The army's position was, 'Why die between two Arab groups?' The government in South Darfur spent enormous time and resources to facilitate reconciliation. The whole of South Darfur was insecure, and the government's biggest fear was that other tribes would join.*[99]

As the fighting spread to other tribes with land disputes, including Salamat, Beni Halba, Fellata, and Habbaniya, government loyalists who had held senior

positions in 2003–04, including former governors Gen. Adam Hamid and Gen. Safi al Nur, Abdel Hamid Musa Kasha, and Abdalla Masar, a former governor of River Nile state and adviser to President Bashir, were shown to have 'less grassroots power and influence than they once did' (ICG, 2007, p. 4).

Government authority in Darfur was confined to the towns—and even there it was being challenged. In West Darfur in 2007, disgruntled paramilitaries paraded through Geneina unopposed, firing into the air. Local people thought it was an invasion. In Tawila in North Darfur in 2008, a Border Guard leader told an army commander who had ordered an end to attacks on IDPs, 'We can resolve this with one bullet!' In al Fasher, angry militiamen threatened to loot banks and the town market if salaries were not paid. A year later, in May 2009, an attempt to stop a member of the CRP from taking women into the town's park after dark, when the gates were locked, escalated into three days of intermittent protests and clashes with Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) that left two people dead and three wounded.

'The government can only exercise limited command and control over the militias,' another analyst said. 'The control exercised by the government is greatest during periods of government military offensives, during which the government expands funding for arms and salaries. When this funding lapses, the ability of the government to control these troops declines significantly.'[100]

Outside the towns, army units had to negotiate passage through the countryside with the tribal militias and rebel groups that controlled it. In this climate of general insecurity, control of territory by force of arms was more vital than ever—especially to nomads needing water and pasture. In many parts of Darfur, however, local agreements between Arabs and non-Arabs prevailed. In the Ain Siro mountains, the author attended a meeting between rebels and militiamen from the nomadic Awlad Rashid tribe, who had been at daggers drawn in 2003–07.

An Awlad Rashid elder present at the meeting said:

In 2003 the government gave us weapons and said, 'You must be with us because the tora bora[101] will push you out and kill you. They want to kill you. After that we will give you the land!' Now we see that was not right; the old life was better. The lying must stop one day. We have learned our lesson. Nothing is

impossible under the sun. The people of Darfur know each other. If they sit down and talk they can settle the problem. If you piss and bury it in the desert, does it smell bad? No! We all have guns, both sides, but since we agreed to stop fighting we have never fired a bullet. We must leave this behind.[102]

According to UN food security analyses, the level of destruction of crops was much reduced in the harvest of 2008, thanks to the respect for local agreements like this.[103] Arab nomads had recognized that their livelihoods depended on re-establishing some form of balance, especially with the Fur, so that markets could reopen and migration routes be unblocked.

Lack of control

Repeated calls on the government to disarm the 'janjaweed', beginning with a 30-day deadline set by the UN Security Council in July 2004, have ignored the plurality of the militias and their motives and overestimated Khartoum's ability to control its proxies, even when it wants to.[104] While the rebellion posed a military threat, it clearly did not want to. Staged demobilization ceremonies, for the benefit of visiting observers, were followed by new distributions of weapons, and in April 2006 the UN's Panel of Experts reported that the government had 'failed to take appropriate steps to disarm non-State armed groups in areas where it can do so, particularly armed groups associated with tribes that on occasion have conducted military operations alongside government forces' (UN Panel of Experts, 2006, para. 85).[105]

But as the Arab militias began to show some independence, and opened channels of communication to the rebels, government concern grew. The security arrangement provisions of the DPA included detailed mechanisms for controlling the militias, negotiated line by line with the government's chief security representative, Lt. Gen. Ismat al Zain. The centrepiece of this plan was a step-by-step restriction of the weaponry and movement of the militias (DPA, 2006, paras. 305–17). Initially they were to impound their heavy weapons and crew-operated weapons for monitoring, and then hand them over. Their areas of operation were to be demarcated and restricted. Confiscation of small arms was limited to responses to violations of these regulations: the

principle was to legitimize all those who carried arms in a responsible manner, and to use them as the means to police those who refused to do so. All the paramilitary forces were to be included in this plan. It was never implemented, but it was instructive insofar as it revealed how far the government was ready to go.

Soon after the DPA—doomed to failure because of its limited support among the rebel movements—was signed, Khartoum made what Abbala leaders say was the first genuine attempt to rein in the militias by collecting weapons. 'The government sent about 30 officers from Khartoum to Kabkabiya to coordinate with Musa Hilal in reorganizing the work of the militia,' an informant close to the process said. 'They called all militias to appointments, registered their names and IDs, etc., and offered incentives for weapons. But they *all* refused. Looting was more profitable. Those who were forced to give up their guns joined the Jundi.'[106]

Khartoum struggled to regain control of the militias as they splintered. In January 2008, according to several sources in South Darfur, it organized a series of meetings between tribal leaders and government envoys including Ali Kushayb. This 'lamentably failed', according to one observer, at a time when Arab tribes were trying to throw off their image as 'janjaweed'. The tribal leaders accused the government of approaching them only when it needed fighters, and said they preferred to go their own way. Musa Hilal and discredited Khartoum leaders distributed money and benefits. But Musa Hilal no longer had the undisputed authority he once had, even among the Mahamid—it was widely rumoured he had joined the NCP and in so doing, in the words of one Mahamid rebel leader, had crossed the line from self-defence leader to 'government stooge'[107]—and the deal cut with Hemeti sparked an inflationary spiral.

The government also attempted to control the rebellion by bringing its proxies into official structures. Since the war began, rights groups had interpreted the incorporation of 'janjaweed' into army, police, and other security organs as an attempt to 'hide' them, despite intense international scrutiny of all the government's actions in Darfur (see Box 2). But possession of military IDs was a main demand of the mutinous militias, strongly backed by tribal leaders. The *nazir* of the Ereigat, Hamad Abdalla Jibril, set two demands for

Box 6 **Impunity**

Despite widespread killing, summary executions, rape, the destruction of hundreds of villages, and the displacement of more than two million people, Sudanese authorities have not pressed charges, in any court, for a single major atrocity committed in Darfur (ICJ, 2007, p. iv). The resulting climate of impunity has been reinforced by the incorporation of irregulars into security, military, and police forces.

Before the attack on al Fasher airport in April 2003, raids and killings were occasionally followed by apparently random arrests and summary trials held in special courts where detainees lacked most rights of defence. After the attack, there were raids and killings but, almost without exception, no arrests. In January 2005, with the huge offensives of 2003–04 over, the UN's Independent Commission of Inquiry said the government had been able to cite only one case of punishment—that of a man who, apparently acting on his own initiative, had burned one village, killing 24 people. The Commission said the Sudanese legal system had serious flaws and was incapable of addressing the abuses in Darfur (ICID, 2005, para. 450).

Courts and committees set up with the stated purpose of investigating atrocities—but often appearing more as attempts to deflect unwelcome international initiatives—have failed to bring to justice those accused of committing crimes.

On 8 May 2004, one day after the Fact-finding Committee of the UN High Commission for Human Rights recommended that an international commission of inquiry be set up, given the 'failure' of Sudan's legal system, President Bashir set up an internal Sudanese commission to investigate 'alleged human rights violations by armed groups in the Darfur states'. Violations by government authorities or by the army were not mentioned as part of the mandate, and the commission concluded there had been no widespread or systematic crimes (ICID, 2005, paras. 459–62).

On 7 June 2005, one day after the ICC announced it would begin investigating crimes against humanity and war crimes, Chief Justice Jalal al Din Mohamed Osman announced the creation of a Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur. Sudanese authorities clearly stated the court was 'considered a substitute' to the ICC. Independent analysts said the court failed to meet 'international standards of independence and impartiality' (ICJ, 2007, p. iv). Only a small number of people were brought before it—and for 'ordinary crimes, not crimes against humanity' (HRW, 2006, p. 10).

On 5 August 2008, three weeks after the ICC announced it was seeking an arrest warrant for Bashir, Justice Minister Abdel Basit Sabdarat announced the creation of a Darfur Crimes Commission of Inquiry (*Sudan Tribune,* 2008a). Prosecutor Nimr Ibrahim said he had shortlisted 176 suspects and had two men in detention. One of the detainees was identified as Ali Kushayb; the other was not identified. Nimr said he was paying 'careful attention' to the ICC case against the former state minister of the interior, Ahmad Haroun, indicted along with Ali Kushayb (*Sudan Tribune,* 2009a). A month later, the Justice Minister said prosecutions in Darfur might not be possible under current circumstances (*Sudan Tribune,* 2009b).

peace: respect for customary land laws that allow Arabs safe passage and pasture—and IDs. 'ID cards are as important for the Arabs as WFP ration cards are for IDPs,' a UN official said. 'They mean a salary and protection from the ICC.'[108]

With the rise of Hemeti, 400 Mahariya were absorbed into the Central Reserve Police after training in al Fasher. Seven hundred Jundi who had been operating along the Kabkabiya–al Fasher road were integrated into the army, and given light weapons and mortars, with a promise of 1,300 more to follow. But the attempts to placate the paramilitaries risked building up future problems: Jundi who were rejected by the army on grounds of fitness threatened violence, forcing a reversal. Attempts to punish mutinous paramilitaries accustomed to impunity (see Box 6) also backfired. In South Darfur at the end of 2007, Jundi threatened to attack Zalingei prison to release five tribal leaders accused of supporting the mutiny. In North Darfur, a group of Arab and Gimr carried out their threat to attack Kabkabiya prison to release Jundi imprisoned there.[109]

The government's desire to reassert control over its proxies was constantly negated by short-term military need, especially after JEM—given exclusive Chadian support in return for supporting Déby's faltering regime—attacked Khartoum in May 2008. Presidential adviser Nafie Ali Nafie, who was officially put in charge of the Darfur file in September 2007 following the death of Majzoub al Khalifa, the government's chief negotiator in Abuja, told UN officials that JEM was more powerful than SAF, with more mobility and weapons. Sudanese ministers stressed the weakness of the army in meetings with foreign diplomats and asked for help to strengthen it, saying, 'We don't control the ground. That's why we bomb from the air.'[110] With President Bashir accused of genocide by the ICC, and the entire state apparatus criminalized by Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, the ministers' requests were rejected even though their predicament was acknowledged.[111]

In August 2008, three months after JEM fought its way to within a mile of the presidential palace with new weapons including mortars and anti-tank guns, government mobilizers began a large recruitment campaign in many parts of Darfur. UN analysts linked what they called the renewed 'funding and arming of many Arab militias' to fresh military offensives against the rebels

from August to October.[112] Arab rebel leaders claimed, without corroborative evidence, that the new recruits received Land Cruisers, light and heavy weapons, fuel, money, and 1,700 military IDs. Amid a spate of kidnappings of foreign relief workers,[113] they speculated that the recruitment drive was meant 'to target foreigners in Darfur' should the ICC issue an arrest warrant for President Bashir.[114]

At the end of 2008, Musa Hilal left for Darfur, saying publicly he was going to recruit 20,000–30,000 men.[115] Shortly after, Abdel Wahid loyalists reported build-ups of militias on the southern side of Jebel Marra, from Gorne to Nyama, with a large concentration at Fogadiko mid-way between Zalingei and Nyertiti, and on the south-western flank of Kabkabiya, from Guldo to Misteriha. Rebel commanders said Arabs and non-Arabs were being recruited and spread among camps of approximately 100 men, each with three vehicles. They said the army was supporting the camps with artillery.[116] Some linked the continuing recruitment to the growing military power of JEM and its promise to launch 'a second invasion of Khartoum' (*Sudan Tribune*, 2008); others said they expected an attempt to install 'peace by force' as a response to the ICC's indictment, on 4 March 2009, of President Bashir.[117]

'Lack of long-term planning kills the government,' said a senior UN analyst. 'It is trying to control the janjaweed and build an officer corps, but its own weakness, and its system of bribery, with money and weapons, undermines its command and control.'

V. Conclusion

The number of government-backed irregulars active in Darfur today is the subject of much debate. The only research specifically into the Northern Rizeigat has suggested that although rates vary dramatically among different communities, more than 50 per cent of Abbala in areas close to large urban centres could be receiving militia salaries, the only source of income for unskilled rural youth without livestock (Young et al., 2009, pp. 68, 76). Nevertheless, Darfur is drifting away from the government.

Khartoum's control over even the paramilitaries on its payroll is highly precarious, dependent on swift delivery of salaries and other benefits. But with the price of oil, Sudan's main export, falling from a high of USD 140 per barrel in July 2008, the government is having trouble paying salaries. Equally disturbing for Khartoum, it is most reliant on a paramilitary leader—Hemeti—who has already mutinied once and who himself asserts that 'the government has no control over the Arab tribes'. Yet in February 2009, the government had no option but to call on Hemeti to drive JEM out of the southern town of Muhajiriya to prevent the rebels from establishing a new springboard in South Darfur after the army proved inadequate for the task.

Groups of periodically mutinous fighters, largely Mahariya, are still active in areas between Kabkabiya and Kutum, Kabkabiya and Tawila, and southeast of Kabkabiya. The bad blood between Mahariya and Mahamid, the two strongest components of the Border Guards, still runs deep, presaging further trouble between these two powerful tribes. Despite formal reconciliation and agreement on *diya* (blood money), Mahariya continue to blame Mahamid both for the killing of Degersho and for that of Nazir Mohamadein's brother, Mahmoud, the military leader of Ghreir. Mahmoud al Dud was ambushed early in 2009 as he returned from Misteriha, 24 hours after meeting Hilal to ask that 300 Mahariya be recruited into the Border Guards.[118]

It is not only the government that is struggling to control the militias. The authority of tribal leaders over their own youth has been undermined by the

rule of guns—especially powerful when tribal administrators are displaced and in disarray, without clerks or functioning courts—and by a new culture among many young men of 'wine, women, and war,' in the words of a North Darfur intellectual.

'Although things are calming down, youth are a problem,' the Awlad Rashid elder quoted above admitted. 'I cannot control them all.' A civil society leader also expressed concern:

> *Most of the janjaweed drink and know drugs. Elders say this is the responsibility of the government because it attracts hopeless people. Nomads do very bad things because they are uneducated. But they know every bush and water hole, and are undefeated since 2004. They don't want peace; they are moving all over to get benefits from insecurity. Their thinking is, 'If the war continues, Sudan will be like Iraq and Afghanistan. Very good! Our life is nothing—so let all people be nothing!'*

The stream of militia defections has increased—not decreased—the insecurity prevailing in Darfur. Fearful of their neighbours and shunned by the international community, most Arab militias disillusioned with the government have either resorted to banditry, made opportunistic alliances with rebel commanders who themselves lack a clear political agenda, or fallen back on Khartoum. In many areas, events on the ground are now determined by local commanders, but understanding of the dynamics of fragmentation is weak. 'The UN don't know who's outside their gate,' says a senior international observer of the peacekeeping efforts.

The chaos of Darfur cannot be fully addressed without improved analysis of the identity and motives of those carrying arms and, in the case of pastoralists, an understanding of how many would resume transhumance if they could and how many no longer wish to live as nomads, perceiving it as incompatible with modernity and education. Already more permanent settlements are being established as the movements of pastoralists are constrained, impacting on their need for land and their attempts to acquire it. For the moment, the range of livelihoods other than militia service is very limited in areas such as North Darfur. Demonizing the militias and their communities, and threatening

aggressive measures against them, may play well with genocide-prevention lobbies, but do not bring peace any closer.

Despite the centrality of Arabs to peace in Darfur, they have been excluded from almost every form of international intervention, from peace-making to relief delivery. Nomads especially are suspicious of outsiders (with the single exception of UNICEF, one of the very few organizations that has acknowledged their vulnerability and worked to alleviate it). They do not trust the government and are increasingly critical of Khartoum-based Darfurian politicians, accusing them of having lost touch with their roots and their culture.[119] For this reason, in 2007, a group of tribal leaders in Darfur attempted to register an independent group, the Arab Coordination Council (ACC), to represent the interests of Arabs. ACC leaders stress that 'the ACC is not against the government', but say that 'between us and the government, there is a gap. There was nothing for us in the DPA.' Their application was rejected.[120]

Darfur's Arabs are also deeply resentful of Westerners, who they say make no distinction between 'Arab', 'nomad', 'pastoralist', and 'janjaweed'. They have no faith in peace brokers who have never given them a voice, but rather seek to remove even the small arms with which they have always protected their herds, their livelihoods. Wishing to renew peaceful relations with their neighbours, but fearful of reprisals, they say 'security depends on a balance of force' and confidence-building must precede disarmament.

Forcible disarmament of the militias is not a viable option. There has only ever been one such attempt in Sudan, targeting the Lou Nuer 'white army' militia in Upper Nile in 2006. It faced armed resistance and produced heavy casualties (Arnold and Alden, 2007). Confiscating all arms is impossible in a region where everyone carries them, and banditry and insecurity are rampant. The 'janjaweed', more powerful than the 'white army' ever was, cannot be disarmed by force and will not disarm voluntarily, even partially, without a peace process in which they participate. What may be possible is the regulation of armaments—bringing the control of weapons under recognized authorities. Draft proposals for this have been circulating since the early days of the war and were developed (incompletely) in the DPA. Security specialists agree that the best—indeed the only—approach to establishing security in Darfur is to regulate and control weapons, not to try to disarm.

Peace in Darfur requires that the international community make a peace agreement the priority. Ever since Abuja, however, peace, security, and the control of militias have been secondary to the deployment of peacekeepers, who will have limited capability to protect civilians in the event of a return to major government–rebel hostilities. With a better-armed, broader-based JEM now seeking regime change, the danger of a resurgence of militias is probably greater than at any time since 2004. Many Arabs fear a bidding war for Arab support between JEM and the government, with a worst-case scenario of Arab fighting Arab across the government–rebel divide. Today, more than ever, it is clear that there will be no peace without the Arabs, and no security without the consent of all those who carry arms.

Endnotes

1 The statistics for January 2008–March 2009 are compiled from the incident database of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). See de Waal (n.d.). Mortality figures for the early years of the war are fiercely debated and still inexact.
2 The researcher Jérôme Tubiana provides an example of this. Noting that humanitarian efforts have focused on 'the good guys', the non-Arab groups who make up the vast majority of the war-displaced, he writes: 'Relief workers have far less exposure to the "bad guys," Arab tribes from which *janjaweed* are enlisted. As an aid worker myself, I heard the same phrase often: "They are criminals."' See Tubiana (n.d.).
3 The very word 'janjaweed' is, in Arab eyes, an insult. For Arabs, a 'janjaweed' is a thief, someone who works for himself—not the tribe. The origin of the word is pure speculation. Some say it is a combination of *jawad* (horseman), *Jiim* (the G3 rifle), and *jinn* (devil). Others say it passed into common currency as a result of the exploits of a notorious robber from the Shattiya tribe, nicknamed Hamid 'Janjaweed', in West Darfur in the 1970s. The story goes that Janjaweed was expelled from the tribe and crossed the border into Chad—returning to Darfur only to snatch his betrothed on the day of her wedding to another man.
4 The *murahaliin* militias were established in the 1980s to fight the SPLA in Southern Sudan. They were drawn largely from the Rizeigat and Misseriya tribes of South Darfur and Kordofan.
5 'Northern Rizeigat' is a term introduced by Sudan's British administrators in 1944 to describe a group of Arabic-speaking, camel-herding nomads whose all-important livestock migration routes have come under increasing threat in recent years from the Zaghawa, a semi-nomadic, non-Arab people living in Darfur and Chad. The main Northern Rizeigat groups are the Mahamid, Mahariya, Nawaiba, Ereigat, and Eteifat.
6 The author spent two weeks in the two states in March 2009 for the Small Arms Survey, but also drew on prior and later visits to Darfur.
7 Alex de Waal prefers referring to a militia 'habit' rather than the commonly used 'strategy'. See, for example, de Waal (2007b).
8 Khartoum's war against the SPLA in the Nuba Mountains in the early 1990s had the aim not only of defeating the insurrection there, but also of depopulating the area by forcibly displacing civilians into 'peace camps'. The government began arming Arab tribes in the Nuba Mountains after an SPLA attack in 1985, and by early 1989 was proposing formalizing them into the 'Popular Defence Forces'. A few years later, militias were on the frontline of the scorched-earth tactics that were employed to depopulate oil-rich areas of Southern Sudan as construction began on a pipeline to Port Sudan.
9 In 1989, the *murahaliin* were formalized as part of the Popular Defence Forces.
10 For details of the origins of the janjaweed, and the spillover from neighbouring states, see Flint and de Waal (2008, pp. 33–70).
11 Saeed, as he is commonly known, is said to have been one of the ringleaders of a group of armed robbers who reportedly stole SDP 1 billon (USD 51 million) from the Bank of Nyala

in 1998. There are unconfirmed reports that he was a sergeant in the regular army in 2003 but was subsequently promoted to officer.

12 Interviews with Arab elders, al Fasher, May 2009.

13 The two other tribal leaders arrested, with 21 of their lieutenants, were Sheikh Hassan Abdel Aziz of the Mahariya and Nazir Abdel Bagi el Omda of the Zabalat. When Gen. Safi Safi al Nur was governor of North Darfur, he gave the Zabalat, a branch of his own Ereigat tribe, a nazirate in Kabkabia—without allocating land—and appointed Abdel Bagi to head it. Ibrahim Suliman reversed the decision, and expelled Abdel Bagi.

14 Interview with Ismail Adam 'Abunduluk', the SLA commander who led the team that destroyed the planes, Ain Siro, March 2007.

15 At the start of the conflict in Darfur, Fur leaders of the SLA attempted to harness the authority of the Tijaniyya to fight the creation of ethnic militias. Envoys were sent to Algeria to urge the spiritual leader of the sect to decline an official invitation to visit Sudan, for fear that Khartoum would depict acceptance as support for its policies. Tijaniyya holy men possess neither wealth nor political clout, but are a force for moderation in Darfur and have a following in all communities.

16 According to the SLA, minutes of the meeting were taken by Haidar Hassan Abachar, a security expert in the Nimeiri regime, 1969–85.

17 Interview with Hafiz Yousif, an Arab lawyer and close associate of SLA Chairman Abdel Wahid Mohamed al Nur, Abuja, 2005.

18 The Darok are one of several small groups that live in Dar Fiya, a predominantly Fur area that extends around Kabkabiya. Many sympathized with the insurgency when it erupted in 2003.

19 This account is based on interviews with members of the Darok tribe in North Darfur in May 2009.

20 In November 2008, the UN Panel of Experts on the Sudan reported that Khartoum had supplied the Chadian rebels with weapons ranging from DShK-type machine guns, Kalashnikov-type automatic rifles, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers to anti-aircraft guns, multi-barrelled rocket launchers, and associated ammunition.

21 E-mail from a Western officer who served in Darfur in 2003–04, March 2009.

22 Pro-government militias were already organized in West Darfur when the insurgency began. For the principal leaders, see HRW (2004b).

23 Interviews with Arab leaders in al Fasher and Nyala, March 2009.

24 Confidential interviews with Western military sources, 2007 and 2009.

25 Interviews with rebels and civilians in North and West Darfur, 2004–06. The most militarized *damrat* were Um Sayala (Eteifat), Masri (Ereigat), and Bor Said (Awlad Rashid).

26 When the paramilitary leader Hemeti rebelled in 2007, he waited until the eve of a combined offensive in order to be able to move into opposition to the government with heavy weapons.

27 Interviews with SAF representatives in Abuja, 2005–06, and SAF documents captured by the SLA in North Darfur.

28 Interviews with Western military officers who served in Darfur, 2007–09.

29 Interviews with prisoners of war, Ain Siro, March 2007.

30 Interviews with Western military observers who witnessed the offensive, 2007.

31 Interview, Khartoum, March 2009. As part of its effort to create an Islamist state, the NIF extensively purged the army upon taking power in 1989, dismissing up to 40 per cent of the

officer corps. Forced conscription, including of children, and a highly unpopular draft introduced in 1992, under pressure of the war in the South, further damaged the corps.

32 Interview with Adam Mohamed Hamid, Khartoum, March 2009.

33 Interview with government mobilizers, Khartoum, March 2009.

34 Interview with Adam Mohamed Hamid, Khartoum, March 2009.

35 Residents of Kutum say Arabs, including 25 policemen, were the first people killed and Arab-owned shops were the first to be looted when the SLA attacked Kutum. The *nazir* of the Ereigat, Hamad Abdalla Jibril, lost seven relatives in the attack and told his tribe the rebels' aim was 'to wipe out Arabs'.

36 See especially Young et al. (2009).

37 Interview with el Sanosi Musa, London, June 2007.

38 Interview with Omda Khidir Ali Abdel Rahman in Amarai, North Darfur, March 2007.

39 Western observers believe that Musa Hilal's primary objective was to obtain the fertile lands of the Fur near Kabkabiya for his Um Jalul. Hilal has estimated that 25 per cent of the Um Jalul are now settled, with the remaining 75 per cent still nomadic. The same sources say that Gen. Abdalla Safi al Nur, a former governor of North Darfur from the Ereigat tribe, supported the government in return for the promise of a ministerial position in Khartoum. After the mobilization began, he became minister for cabinet affairs in the central government.

40 The warrants were issued for militia leader Ali Mohamed Ali Abdel Rahman, better known as 'Ali Kushayb', junior minister Ahmad Haroun, and in March 2009 President Bashir himself.

41 Interviews with tribal leaders in Khartoum, al Fasher, and Nyala, March 2009.

42 Interviews with Mahariya elders and civil society activists, al Fasher, March and May 2009.

43 Interview with former security officer Hassan Ahmad Mohamed, Amarai, March 2007.

44 Interview with Ibrahim Madibu, Abuja, March 2006.

45 For more information on the Baggara struggle for neutrality, see Flint and de Waal (2008, pp. 158–62).

46 The first commissioner, Musa Ali Mohamed Mabidu, was a nephew of Nazir Saeed. This was a show of strength.

47 These figures are reported in the anonymous 2,500-word report published as *Eyewitness Account: The Situation in Southern Darfur in 2004*. For excerpts, see Reeves (2004).

48 Numerous sources say the Mahamid militias around western Jebel Marra and Zalingei came under (ret.) Col. Abdel Fatah Burhan, commissioner of Jebel Marra in 2002–05.

49 The camel-herding Hamdania migrated to South Darfur in 1989 because of drought and administrative disputes in North Darfur, and in 1993 they were given an administration and a small *dar* located in the heart of cultivating tribes. Armed in 2004–05, Abu Noba attacked a number of 'African' villages on the road to al Fasher, including Menawashei and Mershing, and was allowed to settle there.

50 The main Nawaiba leaders were Omda Saif Ma'adi, Ali Yacoub in Khor Ramla, and Ali Amid in Hila Beida. Informants in Zalingei say Ali Yacoub was the only militia leader who remained loyal to the government in South Darfur in 2007, when other militias rebelled.

51 Interview with Hemeti, Nyala, March 2009.

52 Interview with Abbas Abdalla Adouma, Nyala, March 2009.

53 UN civil affairs report, 11 January 2007.

54 The Saada arrived from Chad in 1938 and settled a Missiriya village called Kugi, which they renamed Gardud—'grazing plains'. By 2003, they had six *omdas* (see n. 57), all of them 'jan-

jaweed', according to SLA commanders. Omda Mohamed Harin Yacoub was the link with the SAF in Nyala. Omda Mohamed Azraq Haroun was head of the Popular Police in Gardud.

55 In this context, some blame the Kinin for leading the attack on Tawila in February 2004, and the Goraan, a tribe close to the Zaghawa, for attacking Korma, both reportedly to avenge killings of their kinsmen after they refused to support the SLA.

56 Interview with Mohamed es Sayed, progamme director of the nomadic NGO Masar, al Fasher, March 2009.

57 *Omdas* are administrative chiefs with authority over tax collection units. They are one level below *nazir* or *shartai*. The position carries no land jurisdiction with it. The logic is that if there are enough *omdas*, then there should be a *nazir,* too.

58 As Jérôme Tubiana has pointed out, these fears paralleled the fears of non-Arabs in North Darfur in relation to the Abbala.

59 Email from former UN special envoy Jan Pronk, 12 April 2009.

60 Interview with Mohamed Abdalla Abu Sakkin, Nyala, March 2009.

61 Interview with Omda Ali Hussein, Nyala, March 2009.

62 Interviews with senior Western officers, February and September 2007.

63 In private conversations with mediators and observers, some tribal leaders claimed as much as 80 per cent of the population of Darfur was Arab. In the most detailed census ever undertaken in Sudan, that of 1955–56, the population of Darfur was given as 1,328,765, of whom 375,100, or approximately 28 per cent, were described as Arabs.

64 Inter-Arab fighting included clashes between Nawaiba and Hotiya in Nyangadulo, north of Zalingei, and Awlad Mermet and Awlad Kleb in Geneina.

65 Interview with Mohamed es Sayed of the nomadic NGO Masar, al Fasher, March 2009.

66 A JEM official involved in the negotiations showed the author the agreements, in Chad, in March 2007.

67 Confidential NGO report, December 2005.

68 Intra-SLA fighting closed the migration route again at the end of 2004.

69 Interview with SLA Commander Mujeeb al Zubeir al Rahman, responsible for liaising with Arab militias, Amarai, March 2007. Commander Zubeir provided details of the first three agreements listed here.

70 Interview with Hemeti, Nyala, March 2009.

71 Interview with a JEM official who showed the author copies of the agreements, Abeche, Chad, March 2007.

72 There is much confusion about the Arab rebel groups that proliferated after the DPA—in part because of their chameleon character and ever-changing names, in part because of different translations of the names. The PFA was also known as the Revolutionary Democratic Forces Front.

73 Interview with Abu Sura, N'Djamena, February 2007.

74 Interview with Yassin Yousif, N'Djamena, February 2007.

75 Confidential interview with Western military sources, March 2007.

76 The Tama were under Seif al Din Haroun Abaker and the Gimr Abul Gassim al Gimrawi.

77 Interview with Mahariya elders in North Darfur, May 2009.

78 Having resisted attempts by Mahariya leaders to separate him from Hilal's Border Guards in 2003, Degersho had become increasingly impatient with Hilal. He complained to kinsmen that Hilal systematically discriminated against Mahariya in terms of resources—especially

Land Cruisers, one of the main barometers of military strength in Darfur's desert war, and ammunition.

79 A military document seized by SLA rebels in the village of Um Sidr and signed by SAF Col. Jubaratalla Tom said the offensive in the area comprised four battalions—one of SAF paratroopers, one of security, and two of Border Guards.
80 Interviews with UN sources and Mahamid activists, March 2009.
81 Confidential UN report.
82 Anwar Khater denied forming an alliance with Hemeti. He said Hemeti telephoned him many times, suggesting an alliance, but he refused because of Hemeti's reported human rights abuses.
83 Interview with Hemeti, Nyala, March 2009.
84 Confidential NGO report, December 2007.
85 Interviews with Arab delegates to the Abuja peace talks, December 2006.
86 Private communication, January 2008.
87 Interviews with SLA officers who met the mutineers, Ain Siro, May 2009.
88 The same sources said Hemeti had a permanent force of only 300–400 men but could mobilize 'thousands' in seven to ten days.
89 Confidential email from a Western officer in Sudan, December 2007.
90 Interview with an aide to of Nazir Mohamadein al Dud, al Fasher, May 2009.
91 Interview with Hemeti, Nyala, March 2009.
92 Interview with engineer Haj Hamid Mustafa Adam, Wakheim, March 2007.
93 Ibid.
94 A perception that the government favoured Abbala tribes over Baggara—by turning a blind eye to the fighting, if not by actually rearming them—became another factor leading some Arabs to cut their ties with the government.
95 Provisional UNAMID figures for 2008 showed 1,551 reported violent deaths, of which 640 were victims of inter-tribal fighting—nearly all of it between Arabs. In the first three months of 2009 the figure was 121 killed in intra-Arab fights from a total of 406 fatalities (de Waal, n.d.).
96 Interview with a senior UN official, Nyala, March 2009.
97 *Darfur 2007: Chaos by Design* is the title of a report by Human Rights Watch. See HRW (2007).
98 Other lethal inter-tribal conflicts included Terjem–Salamat, Salamat–Habbaniya, Ma'alia–Rizeigat, and Habbaniya–Fellata.
99 Interview with UN analyst, Khartoum, March 2009.
100 Confidential report, October 2008.
101 A synonym for 'rebel' in Darfur, first used by counterinsurgency forces.
102 Interview with an Awlad Rashid elder in the Ain Siro mountains, May 2009.
103 Personal communication, Alex de Waal, March 2009.
104 At the Abuja peace talks, Gen. al Zain for the government and rebel leader Abdel Wahid en Nur agreed that even if they had been granted five months, the task would have been 'impossible', and implementation of the agreement would have stalled.
105 The Panel was mandated by Security Council Resolution 1591 of 29 March 2005.
106 Confidential interview, al Fasher, March 2009.
107 Telephone interview with a Mahamid rebel leader, August 2007.
108 Interview with UN official, Khartoum, March 2009.
109 Confidential report from a local NGO, January 2008.

110 Interviews with UN officers and Western diplomats, Khartoum, March 2009.
111 On 14 July 2008, ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo announced that he was seeking an arrest warrant for President Bashir on three counts of genocide, five of crimes against humanity, and two of murder. He accused Bashir of 'masterminding and implementing' a plan to destroy some ethnic groups in Darfur and of using government soldiers and Arab militias to 'purposefully target civilians' belonging to those ethnic groups. ICC judges rejected the genocide charges. See, for example, Pflanz (2009).
112 Interviews with civilians and UNAMID officers in Khartoum and Darfur, March 2009.
113 Three Westerners working for Médecins Sans Frontières were kidnapped in North Darfur in March 2008. One month later, two Westerners belonging to Aide Médicale Internationale were kidnapped in South Darfur.
114 Communiqué from the Revolutionary United Front Forces, 30 October 2008.
115 Hilal reportedly charged SDG 50–100 (USD 23–46) for each application, leading to fresh unrest when the applications hung fire.
116 Email communication with UNAMID official, 5 April 2009.
117 Telephone conversation with SLA Commander Suleiman Marajan, August 2008.
118 Interview with Mahariya elders, al Fasher, March and May 2009.
119 Interviews with Abbala leaders in North Darfur, March and May 2009.
120 Interview with ACC coordinator Sheikh Hassan Abdel Aziz, al Fasher, May 2009.

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