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Darfur's Gold Rush

State-Sponsored Atrocities 10 Years After the Genocide

Omer Ismail and Akshaya Kumar May 2013



enough

The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

Satellite Sentinel Project

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Introduction

Ten years after reports of *janjaweed* militias committing atrocities at the behest of the Sudanese government first propelled Darfur into the headlines, state-sponsored abuses continue in Sudan's troubled western region.¹ Although conflict never really stopped in Darfur, since January 2013, escalating waves of violence have plunged the region into the worst humanitarian crisis in years. As U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice has noted, over five times as many people have been displaced in the first few months of 2013 than in the entirety of the previous year.² Over 150 villages have been burned and the U.N. estimates that at least 150,000 people have been displaced in the wake of coordinated attacks by armed Abbala militias, elements of which include the historically state-sponsored *janjaweed* forces.³ In an eerie echo of the past, the Sudanese government's narrative—which maintains that the conflicts plaguing Darfur are intractable “inter-tribal” battles⁴—has successfully dominated the popular understanding of recent events.⁵ This report challenges that descriptive framework by placing the latest round of attacks within the broader historical context and highlighting evidence supporting the Sudanese government's role in spurring the recent clashes.

Drawing on extensive interviews with sources in Darfur, Khartoum and the diaspora community, the Enough Project argues that the Abbala militias' recent power play to gain control over lucrative gold mines in North Darfur is a continuation of state-sponsored atrocity and plunder. Even a casual observer of the conflicts in Sudan cannot fail to notice the overlap between the resource-rich regions on Sudan's peripheries and the conflicts that inflame them.⁶ For over a decade, the government of Sudan has pursued a strategy of economic plunder of the periphery through violence and forcible demographic change.⁷ This approach has led to the repeated displacement, fragmentation, and ethnic polarization of the vibrant and diverse communities occupying areas on its periphery, including South Sudan, which seceded in 2011, Darfur, Abyei, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and eastern Sudan.⁸ The Sudanese ruling party's heightened interest in Darfur's recently discovered gold mines and corresponding role in spurring violence in the area fits this historic pattern of employing favored Arab nomadic tribes as tools for consolidating economic control and power.

Urgency to replace easy revenue streams from southern oil, which dramatically dried up following South Sudan's independence in 2011, has accelerated the Sudanese govern-



In January 2013, UNAMID delivered more than 44,000 kilograms of urgent humanitarian aid, by land and air, to thousands of civilians who were displaced in the North Darfur villages of Saraf Omra, Kabkabya, El Sereif and Abu Gamra.

UNAMID

ment's ongoing effort to secure control over Darfur's resource-rich areas. Historically, the Beni Hussein community, a sedentary farming and cattle-rearing Arab community, has been exempted from attack by state-sponsored militias. However, the recent discovery of gold reserves in their home area, and intense economic pressure on the Sudanese government following South Sudan's secession, has fundamentally altered that dynamic. In this latest phase of state-sponsored violence, even sedentary Arab tribes have found themselves under attack by the government-armed militias on camels, horseback and in "technicals," state-supplied Land Cruisers fitted with high-caliber machine guns.

The Abbala militias' violent power play to consolidate control over North Darfur's gold mines demands greater attention and a coordinated response from the international community. This report offers six recommendations for a comprehensive solution to address not only the recent waves of violence in Darfur, but also the root causes of the conflicts plaguing the country. Among other things, avoiding another reprise of state-sponsored atrocity will require confronting the governance problems crippling Sudan, supporting inter-communal reconciliation efforts, bridging the gap in justice and accountability for Darfur's victims, guaranteeing humanitarian access to Darfur's conflict-affected regions, promoting sustainable economic development in the region and pushing for greater scrutiny of supply chains to prevent the government of Sudan from benefitting from trade in what should be considered and labeled "conflict gold."

A Golden Opportunity

Cash-strapped and dollar-starved, Sudan sees gold as its new oil.⁹ Since the Sudanese government is more economically vulnerable than it has been in years, untapped resources like northern Darfur's gold have become increasingly attractive. The country's annual gold production, over 40 tons that yielded around 2.2 billion U.S. dollars last year, has become an important source of foreign exchange.¹⁰ Sudan's gold industry now ranks third on the continent, after Ghana and South Africa.¹¹ According to the Sudanese government's own reporting, gold accounted for almost 60% of the country's overall exports in 2012.¹²

An Ailing Economy

The country's economy has been ailing ever since it lost three-quarters of its oil revenue to South Sudan after the latter's secession in July 2011.¹³ These new economic pressures have led to the implementation of austerity measures that sparked unprecedented public protest.¹⁴ At the same time, Sudan's central bank has been printing money to finance a



Miners take refuge in Saraf Omra, North Darfur, after fleeing the gold mines in the Jebel Amer.

RANIA ABDULRAHMAN/UNAMID

deficit officially set at £10 billion, (around \$1.49 billion) at black market rates.¹⁵ As a consequence, experts estimate that inflation—already above 40 percent¹⁶—could hit 70 percent by mid-year 2013.¹⁷ Already, the government has been forced to double the minimum wage and has repeatedly attempted to reduce fuel subsidies, which it claims account for 12 percent of state spending.¹⁸ In a last ditch measure, the central bank has reportedly restricted the physical cash supply to try and halt inflationary pressures.¹⁹

South Sudan's January 2012 decision to cease its 350,000 barrel-per-day oil production has exacerbated these dire economic straits.²⁰ The 14-month standoff with South Sudan deprived the Sudanese government of millions of dollars in transit fees and contributed to a climate of uncertainty.²¹ Both sides are engaged in dangerous brinksmanship, with each side waiting for the other's collapse.²² Although the two Sudans signed an agreement to facilitate the restart of oil exports in August 2012, implementation began in early April 2013: six months behind schedule.²³ In the meantime, the government of Sudan was forced to buy crude oil at higher than market prices to keep its refineries operating.²⁴ These deals weaken Sudan's economy but enrich the middlemen within Sudan's government, who view each transaction as an opportunity for personal financial gain. When compounded, these economic pressures have placed an unprecedented strain on the ruling party's political authority and control, catalyzing a survivalist reaction from the regime.



A miner explains the incident that took place gold mines, explaining that it forced thousands of mine workers to seek refuge in neighboring villages.

RANIA ABDULRAHMAN/UNAMID

Consolidating Control Over Gold

The Central Bank of Sudan has identified consolidation of government control over gold produced through traditional mining as a key objective in its 2012 policy.²⁵ In light of these dynamics, the government's 2012 decision to appoint Kamal Abdel Latif as minister of minerals is significant. Abdel Latif's close ties to the security services and influential role within the ruling party demonstrates the government's renewed focus on this sector.²⁶ As a part of this effort, the Sudanese central bank has been buying gold from traders at higher than market prices to sell on the international market in an effort to secure foreign exchange.²⁷ The decision to pay more for gold in local currency and sell at market price on the international market for foreign exchange has further devalued the Sudanese pound. In September 2012, the Sudanese government opened its first domestic gold refinery.²⁸ Citing plans to establish a domestic stock exchange for precious metals, the Central Bank of Sudan also took the extraordinary step of formally banning the export of crude gold ore in December 2012.²⁹

Mohammed Hassan Osman, the general manager of the government's new refinery, said during an interview with Sudan state-owned radio that the current lack of formal international recognition of the refining facility has led to lower prices for Sudanese gold on the international market.³⁰ However, if the refinery is certified as meeting international standards, Sudanese gold will become eligible to trade on certain international commodity exchanges, expanding potential market opportunities. In the absence of a designation as "conflict affected," if the refinery achieves three uninterrupted years of production, Sudan's gold will likely be freely traded on the international exchanges.³¹

As a consequence, avoiding a "conflict affected" designation on the international market will be crucial for the continued growth of Sudan's burgeoning gold industry. In its Gold Supplement to its broader supply chain due diligence guidelines, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, suggests that companies avoid even indirectly perpetuating conflict by exercising extra due diligence on gold coming from "conflict affected" or "high risk" areas.³² Due to the voluntary nature of the OECD's due diligence guidelines, each enterprise is free to make its own list of "conflict affected" areas. The OECD defines "conflict-affected" as "areas identified by the presence of armed conflict, widespread violence, including violence generated by criminal networks, or other risks of serious and widespread harm to people."³³ A clear argument is available that Sudan's gold industry is "conflict affected" but applying that designation to gold originating from Sudan remains within the purview of individual companies.

The Changing Face of Sudan's Gold Industry

The dramatic rise of artisanal gold mining throughout Sudan has altered the dynamics of Sudan's extractive sector. Historically, Sudan has only boasted one official gold mine, in the northeast of the country. In operation since 1992, Hassaï, which is about 50 km from Khartoum, consists of 18 open industrial mining pits producing high-grade oxide ore. The mine has produced over 2.3 million ounces of gold to date, and it is operated by Sudan's Ariab Mining Company in partnership with Canada's La Mancha Resources.

Prior to 2010, traditional artisanal gold mining produced negligible output in Sudan. However, the increasingly stark economic conditions in Sudan motivated youth to prospect for gold independently in Sudan's hinterlands. Eventually several rich fields were discovered by these independent artisanal miners. Currently, most of Sudan's gold is sourced from artisanal miners. More than 750,000 Sudanese are prospecting for gold at more than 100 sites across the country.³⁴

The Minister of Minerals, Kamal Abdul Latif, frequently discusses the government's emphasis on re-energizing the nation's gold production sector. In an interview on Sudan TV, Minister Abdel Latif, described Sudan's still nascent mining industry as its greatest untapped resource.³⁵ In early April 2013, he claimed that Sudan has at least 940 tons of untapped gold reserves. Last year, Russian and Chinese companies were granted permits to explore a 769 kilometer area. The Sudanese government also signed exploration agreements with companies from South Africa and Britain.³⁶ Most analysts expect that more land acreage will be portioned off to foreign companies as well as to Sudanese investors to expand the nation's gold production. Currently, 100 companies are licensed for exploration and development operations. However, only 13 firms are in the production stage.

Boomtown: Jebel 'Amer

Two years ago, Jebel 'Amer was a sleepy collection of hamlets with a population of less than a thousand people.³⁷ After gold was discovered in the area, prospectors from around Darfur and the broader region spilled into the town.³⁸ The population of Jebel 'Amer exploded.³⁹ The gold-mining area, which only encompasses three square kilometers (one square mile) of territory in Al Sref hosted 3,000 independent mining sites and at least 70,000 people by the end of 2012. As evidenced by the satellite imagery below, a relatively desolate ravine blossomed into a bustling mining outpost in just a few short months. In the wake of the boom, Jebel 'Amer produced 14 tons of gold in 2012.

Despite the absence of major mining operations or foreign direct investment, in 2012, Jebel 'Amer produced a third of Sudan's gold.⁴⁰ This statistic is all the more compelling since extraction only began in earnest in March 2012 and mining was done almost entirely by using the artisanal panning method rather than a more efficient industrial method.

In 2012, the U.N. documented that thousands of children dropped out of school to engage in small scale gold mining across Darfur.⁴¹ The discovery of gold in Jebel 'Amer likely attracted many of these children. Enough Project researchers visiting refugee camps in Chad in late 2012 heard that many of the camp's teachers and older students had abandoned the camp to seek gold in the nearby mining areas.⁴²

Minerals Minister Kamal Abdel Latif spent four days visiting the Jebel 'Amer area in late December 2012 along with the Governor of North Darfur, Osman Kibir.⁴³ Following the minister's visit, in late December 2012, Sudan Vision reported that the North Darfur cabinet held a meeting to develop strategies to ensure that all the gold produced in Jebel 'Amer would be directed to the Central Bank of Sudan.⁴⁴ Just a week after the minister returned from his visit to the region, the Abbala militias' mobilization against the Beni Hussein began. Although anecdotal, the sequencing of these visits and meetings with the Abbala mobilization offers circumstantial evidence of state involvement in the attacks.



No Mining Activity



Significant Number of Mines



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan

DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, February 9, 2012



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan

DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, January 13, 2013

In the span of months, an almost entirely uninhabited location attracted thousands of miners and associated infrastructure. According to DigitalGlobe analysts, the first image, captured in early February 2012, shows an undeveloped ravine in Jebel 'Amer. A shot of the same location in mid-January 2013 shows several thousand tents and probably just as many artisanal mines.

Removing the Obstacle of the Beni Hussein Control

The recent violence perpetrated by the Abbala militiamen against fellow Arabs, the Beni Hussein, demonstrates the new primacy of economic enrichment in the government's calculus. The Beni Hussein community is the traditional custodian of the Jebel 'Amer area.⁴⁵ The tribe's *sultan* and his local mining committee controlled licensing of mining permits for the area.⁴⁶ The tribe regulated access to the wells, water basins, and markets through the systematic collection of locally enforced access fees. Reports indicate that all money went to support the local bureaucracy and that all miners accepted the Beni Hussein sultan's authority.⁴⁷

Observers of the dynamics in Darfur suggest that the Beni Hussein community's monopoly on the licensing process was a roadblock for Sudanese government officials seeking to consolidate control over the mines.⁴⁸ In particular, many of the Darfuris interviewed for this report suggest that Osman Yosuf Kibir, the governor of North Darfur, was interested in securing a stake in the mines.⁴⁹ However, due to the Beni Hussein control of the permit process, Kibir was only able to obtain licenses for less than 20 mining sites even though he owns the pumps needed to operate far more.⁵⁰ The Agence France Press cites an anonymous source that confirmed that the Beni Hussein tribe was refusing to pay newly imposed government mining fees that added up to "huge, huge money."⁵¹

Artisanal Mines



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan

DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, February 23, 2013

The Beni Hussein *sultan* had independently granted thousands of mining licenses to artisanal miners operating on small plots. As shown by Jebel 'Amer's pockmarked landscape in this DigitalGlobe satellite image from February 2013, this resulted in a proliferation of small scale mining operations.

Paralleling Previous Tactics

During the height of Darfur's genocide from 2003 to 2009, the Beni Hussein allowed the *janjaweed* forces free passage through their fertile agricultural lands in al-Sref.⁵² Until recently, the sedentary farming community had been spared attacks by the Abbala militias or state-sponsored *janjaweed*.⁵³ This latest violence represents a significant shift. Even Sudan's own permanent representative to the United Nations acknowledges the new primacy of mineral resources in its calculus. In his remarks to the U.N. Security Council, Daffa-Alla ElHag Ali Osman explained, "what started as competition over land, water and grazing areas is now about precious metals, such as gold."⁵⁴ Although Osman's remarks sought to attribute this shift in motives to tribes in Sudan, the analysis is equally apt when considering the government's priorities.

In their attempt to consolidate control over Jebel 'Amer's lucrative mining trade, the Sudanese government decided to use the Abbala militias—who they had previously used to target the Fur and Zaghawa—against other Arabs. In January 2012, Agedd el-Khail, a prominent Abbala leader, gave an interview with Radio Dabanga describing an Abbala goal to "rid" the Jebel 'Amer and al Sref areas of the Beni Hussein.⁵⁵ Eyewitnesses report that the Abbala militias established checkpoints on all roads leading out of the Jebel 'Amer region.⁵⁶ These checkpoints screened travelers, specifically targeting the Beni Hussein. Locals reported witnessing members of Abbala militias closing down vital roads that lead to the capital of the Beni Hussein homestead, including the ones between Al-Sref Beni Hussein and Saraf Omra.⁵⁷ Closing these roads "severely affected the provision of food" and made al-Sref Beni Hussein completely inaccessible for weeks.⁵⁸ Paralleling tactics used during the height of the genocide, this latest wave of violence has seen the Abbala militia reprise their role as a tool of state repression.



Women displaced by fighting in Jebel 'Amer carry their possessions on their heads in El Sereif, North Darfur.

SOJOUD EL GARAI, UNAMID

Abbala Ties to the Janjaweed

Human Rights Watch confirmed government support to Darfur's nomadic *janjaweed* militias almost a decade ago.⁵⁹ The *janjaweed*, which Alex DeWaal described as "counter-insurgency on the cheap," has been accused of rampant human rights abuses and atrocities.⁶⁰

Abbala militiamen, who formed the backbone of the *janjaweed* during the early part of the decade, continue to maintain high level positions in Sudan's security forces, including the Abu Tira border guard.⁶¹ Communities of migratory camel herding nomads, the Abbala are one of Darfur's landless nomadic groups. British colonial authorities in the 19th century granted homelands to most of Darfur's sedentary groups, but nomads like the Abbala were forced to depend on customary land use rights.⁶² In recent years, these customary rights have been threatened by drought, desertification, and rising violence.⁶³ For years, unskilled rural youth without livestock or land claims turned to state-sponsored militias or *janjaweed*, which paid monthly salaries of \$117.⁶⁴ At the height of the genocide, these militias employed over half of Abbala in areas close to large urban centers.⁶⁵

The Darfur Peace Agreement, or DPA, specifically requires that armed militia groups like the Abbala be stripped of their weapons.⁶⁶ Shortly after the DPA was signed, 30 SAF officers from Khartoum went to Kabkabiya to disarm the Abbala and coordinate with Musa Hilal,⁶⁷ an influential tribal leader.⁶⁸ The officers called militias to appointments, registered their names, and offered incentives to give up their weapons. However, the militias refused to surrender their weapons. Since then, the government has made no further serious effort to disarm them.⁶⁹

When asked about the recent clashes, Musa Hilal put the blame squarely on Osman Kibir, the governor of North Darfur. In a long interview, Hilal confirmed that he thought that the Abbala were used by the government to fight a war of economic enrichment.⁷⁰ In recent comments, Hilal objected to the Sudanese government's use of the Abbala militias. His remarks both acknowledged their long standing relationship and objected to what he saw as the community's recent exploitation for the government's economic gain.⁷¹

The government's active role in the late 2012 conflict over the Hashaba mine, about 50 kilometers east of Kutum, in North Darfur, foreshadowed its increased interest in the gold mining sector in the region. In September 2012, pro-government forces attacked the rebel-held town of Hashaba. The attack killed hundreds and displaced thousands.⁷² A few days later, the Sudanese Armed Forces bombed a gold mine in Hashaba.⁷³ UNAMID confirmed the bombing, noting that its mission to the area observed one bomb crater, three decomposed bodies and what was alleged to be an area containing 16 graves.⁷⁴ Notably, the mission was refused access to the area for over two weeks following the bombing.⁷⁵ In mid-October, a UNAMID fact-finding mission to Hashaba came under attack by unidentified armed assailants firing heavy machine guns, mortars, and rocket propelled guns.⁷⁶ One peacekeeper was killed and three others were injured during the exchange of fire.⁷⁷ Later in February 2013, a pro-government militia forcibly took control of the Hashaba mine.⁷⁸

An Abbala Call to Arms

In January 2013, the Abbala militias rapidly mobilized troops to fight the Beni Hussein for control over the Jebel 'Amer area. Reports suggest that Abbala militiamen from across Darfur collected at least 4,000 horses, 2,500 camels, and 130 government-owned

vehicles.⁷⁹ According to the Abbala leadership, the militias gathered fighters from 25 communities and planned coordinated attacks on the Beni Hussein in January.⁸⁰ This mobilization resulted in weeks of violent attacks on the Beni Hussein across the broader North Darfur region.⁸¹ Nasserudin Abu Sakhala, local commander of the border guard, confirmed this coordinated mobilization to Radio Dabanga.⁸² Abu Sakhala shared that the group converged in Western Jebel Marra before embarking on their attacks across North Darfur and in Jebel ‘Amer.⁸³ Unconfirmed reports indicate that some of the Abbala militia leaders historically involved in *janjaweed* activities, including General Abdallah Safi Nur, were involved in directing this latest mobilization.⁸⁴

By late February, one eyewitness reported that Abbala militiamen at a checkpoint told him they had come all the way from South Kordofan to join the battle against the Beni Hussein.⁸⁵ The witness, a local trader, reported that he had been stopped by Abbala militiamen at a checkpoint outside of al Sref Beni Hussein.⁸⁶ The trader told the Enough Project that the men who stopped him demanded 50 percent of his goods in exchange for allowing his safe passage. When the trader refused to hand over his wares, the Abbala militiamen told him that they had joined the cause after being summoned from South Kordofan and were seeking their promised financial gain.⁸⁷ Attempting to justify their demands, the militiamen explained that they had arrived after the initial pillage of Jebel ‘Amer and were unable to secure other loot.⁸⁸ While anecdotal, this points to the mercenary nature of the Abbala.

Government Involvement in Clashes

The first wave of Abbala attacks began in early January and rocked Darfur’s north for weeks until an uneasy ceasefire was brokered between the groups in late January by the Sudanese government.⁸⁹ The second wave of clashes erupted on February 21 when witnesses from West, Central, and South Darfur told Radio Dabanga they saw large groups of border guards and Abbala militants heading towards Al-Sref Beni Hussein.⁹⁰ Both sides signed another peace agreement in early March and then participated in a reconciliation conference in April.

Border Intelligence Brigade and the Abu Tira

Abbala attackers used rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and mounted cannons, which long-time observers of the conflict attest could have only come from the government.⁹¹ The militias also used government vehicles. When questioned about their use of government weapons and vehicles in the attack on the Beni Hussein, Abu Sakhala described himself as a member of the government’s security forces with the authority to use government vehicles for such operations.⁹²

Residents of Kebkabiya identified individual officers of the Border Intelligence Brigade among the instigators of the first wave of violence against the Beni Hussein in early January 2013.⁹³ One witness told Amnesty International that 53 residents of his village in Martam Bay were killed in the early hours of January 9, 2013.⁹⁴ He said the attack was carried out by a group of gunmen in eight vehicles. The anonymous witness identified a number of the perpetrators by name and as officers of the Abu Tira Border Guard,⁹⁵ a unit of the SAF that has repeatedly been involved in gross human rights abuses.⁹⁶

During the late February wave of attacks, hundreds of armed Abbala militiamen attacked al-Sref Beni Hussein, where over 60,000 displaced people had sought refuge in the aftermath of the first wave of attacks. Internally displaced people interviewed by Amnesty International shared that armed men arrived on 150 camels and 200 horses and in more than 40 four-wheel drive vehicles to attack the town.⁹⁷ Fifty-three people were killed and 66 injured during the late February attack, most of whom were civilians, including women and children.⁹⁸ Attackers also burned down houses and other civilian buildings in al-Sref. Witnesses report that when they fought back with Kalashnikovs, they were able to kill 17 of the attackers, most of whom carried government issued identity documents identifying them as members of the Border Guard.⁹⁹

"We Are Both Losers and The Beneficiary is the Government"

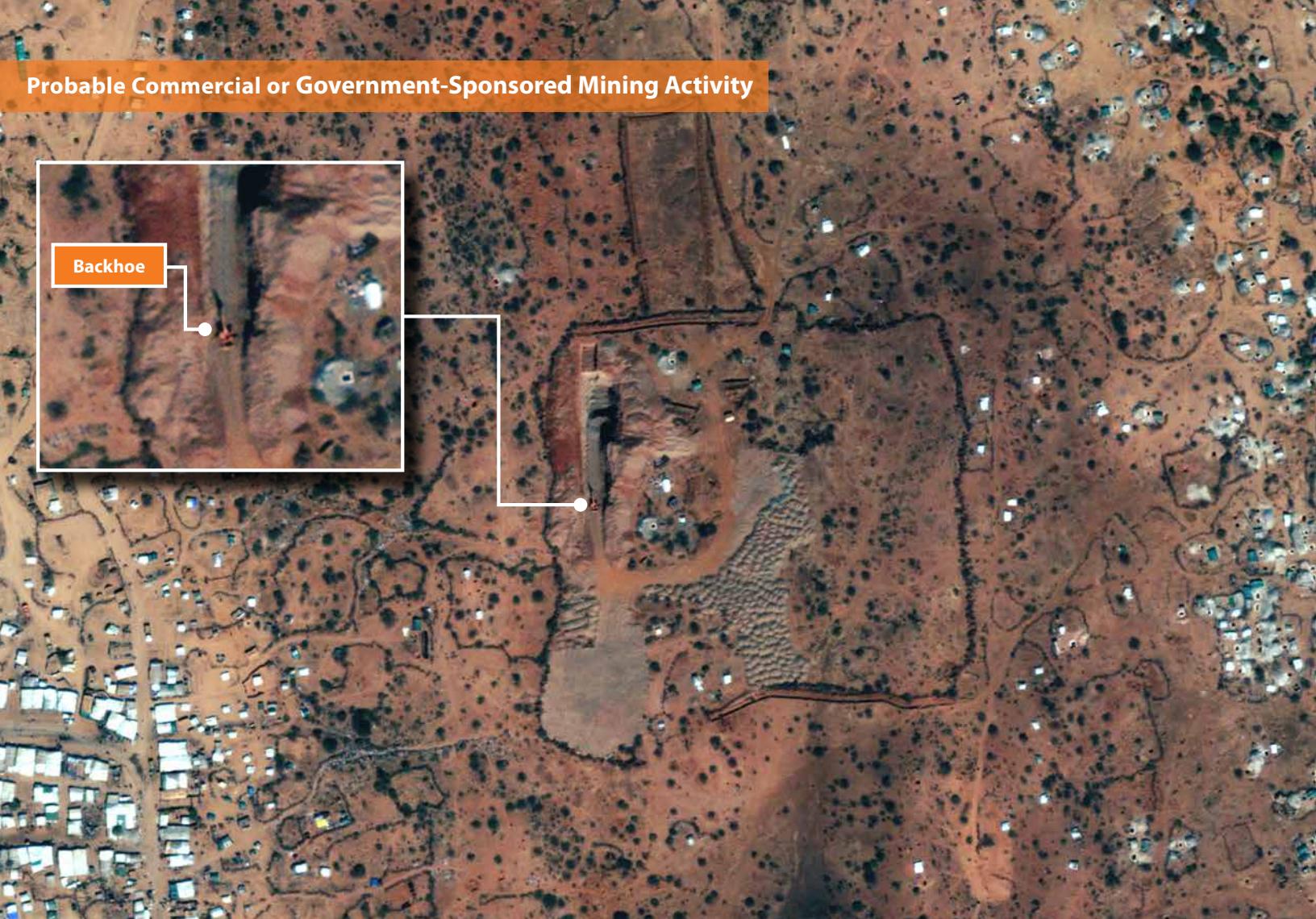
Recently, Abbala informants have publicly voiced concerns that government forces catalyzed the group's mobilization against the Beni Hussein for their own benefit. An Abbala leader confessed that he had come to realize that their community had been used by the government to fight a war that was against their own interests.¹⁰⁰ His remarks continued, "we went to war and died while other people filled their pockets with the spoils."¹⁰¹ Ahmed Abdullah Ishaq, one of the Abbala chiefs, told Radio Dabanga the tribal hostilities in North Darfur are the result of a plan orchestrated by the ruling National Congress Party.¹⁰² "I am calling upon my relatives from both sides: bloodshed and deaths are needless. When you die, other people take advantage of your deaths... We have no enemy but the government. If the Beni Hussein annihilate the [Abbala] Rizeigat or vice-versa, they are both losers and the beneficiary is the government."¹⁰³



Displaced persons take shelter in a public building in El Sireaf, North Darfur, after fleeing Jebel Amer.

SOJOURN ELGARAI/UNAMID

Probable Commercial or Government-Sponsored Mining Activity



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan
DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, December 17, 2012

Satellite imagery confirms the presence of at least one backhoe that could represent the beginning of large scale mining operations in the Jebel 'Amer area in December 2012. According to DigitalGlobe analysts a backhoe was observed excavating a large hole near the central market area. No other ore processing equipment was observed. Nevertheless, the presence of heavy machinery suggests a burgeoning interest in more formal industrial operations in the area.

A Fig Leaf of Neutrality

In early February, Osman Mohammed Kibir, the governor of North Darfur, told Sudan News Agency, or SUNA, that the army had now restored order to the Jebel 'Amer area, adding that "criminals" on both sides were to blame for the new wave of violence.¹⁰⁴ Kibir used this justification to send troops to al-Sref Beni Hussein to "stabilize the situation and enforce the rule of law."¹⁰⁵

Despite its inaccuracy, the government of Sudan has consistently advanced this narrative. Even its permanent representative to the United Nations has made the point of suggesting that "most of those incidents, however, are strictly tribal clashes, where the Government only intervened to maintain order and enforce state authority, as well as help with tribal reconciliation by coordinating with elders and tribal chiefs."¹⁰⁶ By portraying North Darfur as an ungovernable region beset by uncontrollable and intractable tribal disputes, the government of Sudan has attempted to rationalize the ongoing violence. The U.N. representative's remarks continued, "the bloody confrontations [...] northern Darfur are no more than an armed engagement between two tribes over areas traditionally used for gold mining."¹⁰⁷

According to their own admission, the Sudan Armed Forces, or SAF, withdrew from the gold mine area of Jebel 'Amer in North Darfur, "in order to avoid confrontation with Abbala militias in early January.¹⁰⁸ Publicly, the SAF troops stationed in Jebel 'Amer claimed that they were "fed-up with the harassment and provocation" by the Abbala militias.¹⁰⁹ The government forces made a point to announce that their men along with 33 vehicles that include carriers, Land Cruisers, and tankers for water and fuel, returned to the Kabkabiya headquarters.¹¹⁰ More recently, the governor of North Darfur ordered that any member of the Abbala or the Beni Hussein tribes who try to foil the reconciliation conference should be arrested.¹¹¹ In mid-April, the North Darfur Urban Planning Minister Al Fateh Abdulaziz Abdulnabi took a four-day tour around the mine and Garrah Az Zawia, a village heavily affected by the conflicts.¹¹² He noted the continued presence of 15,000 illegal workers at the Jebel 'Amer site and promised that authorities would resort to "military measures" against those who refused to leave.¹¹³ The government official's remarks emphasized that the temporary closure was intended to enable authorities to "take appropriate steps in promoting peace between the Abbala and the Beni Hussein and in restoring life in Al Sareif and in neighboring North Darfur localities."¹¹⁴ Statements of this type, which frame the government as a neutral arbiter between warring tribes, reflect the government's active campaign to spread misleading information about the conditions in Darfur.

Failure of Civilian Protection

Forcible Displacement

The clashes between the Abbala and the Beni Hussein resulted in the forced displacement of tens of thousands of vulnerable civilians.¹¹⁵ Following the first round of clashes in January 2013, the U.N. estimated that over 100,000 people fled to neighboring towns.¹¹⁶ By January 7, 2013, the neighboring towns of Kabkabiya and Saraf Omra had absorbed 10,000 and 2,000 people, including many injured.¹¹⁷ In the first two weeks of February, over 5,000 refugees fled to the Goz Beida region of Southeast Chad to escape the conflict in Jebel 'Amer, according to Saudi Hassan, head of the Chadian National Committee for receiving Sudanese refugees in the region.¹¹⁸ By April 2013, most accounts confirmed that more than 150,000 people had been displaced as a result of the Abbala–Beni Hussein fighting.¹¹⁹

A Humanitarian Disaster

The Abbala attacks on the Beni Hussein community have had a devastating effect on civilian security in Darfur. Although access to areas affected by the violence has been incredibly limited, reports of widespread killings, rape, and forced starvation have been trickling out. Local leaders estimate that hundreds have died and over 150 villages have been burned as a result of this fighting.¹²⁰ These attacks have led to what Ali Al-Za'tari, the U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan described as the biggest forced displacement in Darfur in recent years.¹²¹ Not only do these displaced peoples face basic humanitarian challenges including inadequate access to food, clean water, and medicine, they are also vulnerable to further violence, such as rape. In his report, the UN Secretary General noted that "insecurity is further exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms in camps for internally displaced persons, towns and villages. [...] whenever armed clashes occurred between two or more groups, incidents of sexual violence were reported within a week or two of such attacks."¹²² The report, which draws on the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict's research, highlights evidence that in 13 cases, survivors of sexual violence were able

to "clearly identify the alleged perpetrators by following footprints leading to specific military bases or through their uniforms."¹²³ In those cases, the perpetrators in these cases included members of the security agencies of the Government of the Sudan, specifically the Central Reserve Police, Sudanese Armed Forces and the national police.¹²⁴

On March 11, 2013, a 35-year-old displaced woman was abducted at gun-point by three Abbala insurgents while collecting wood near the Jebel Shamal camp in Saraf Omra.¹²⁵ After raping her "day and night" for three days, the militiamen put the victim on the back of a camel and dropped her near the camp.¹²⁶ Similar reports are emerging from across the affected region. Six displaced persons in North Darfur were kidnapped by Abbala militias and forced to dig water wells near their base for over a day, "uninterruptedly".¹²⁷ A sheikh told Radio Dabanga that the six people, who had sought refuge from the fighting in Jebel 'Amer in Kabkabiya, had gone north of the town on Friday to collect firewood when they were ambushed and beaten.¹²⁸

Tents/Structures



Destroyed/Abandoned Structures

DigitalGlobe



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan

DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, January 12, 2013



Jebel 'Amer, North Darfur, Sudan

DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, February 23, 2013

Before and after images show that tents were removed following the massive displacement of miners. Comparing the same area between January 2013 and the end of February 2013 shows destroyed or abandoned tents and other structures. According to Digital Globe analysts, imagery taken on February 23, 2013, does reveal a significant reduction in the number of tents and some destruction to the miners' camp. A market area near the center of the mining operation showed tents and other structures probably destroyed and abandoned.

Access Limitations on the U.N. Mission

Although the hybrid peacekeeping mission's status of forces agreement mandates complete and unimpeded access, in reality its access is subject to government manipulation.¹²⁹ The Secretary General's April 2013 report on the UNAMID notes that "insecurity and restrictions of movement imposed by the authorities hindered investigations into human rights violations in Jebel Marra and Jebel Amir."¹³⁰ Consistently, areas are subjected to limited access or severely delayed access to allow the Sudanese government and its elements to sanitize the record prior to the arrival of external monitors.

In early January, a United Nations report announced that the government of North Darfur has "not yet authorized an inter-agency team to travel" to the areas affected by the tribal clashes between the Abbala and the Beni Hussein to carry out a comprehensive assessment of needs of the displaced.¹³¹ In mid-January, UNAMID was finally able to deploy a team of civilians, military, and police to investigate the situation in the affected areas. However, this access was granted only after the first wave of fighting had subsided. Abbala militias continued to blockade vital roads to the capital and neighboring towns including Kabkabiya and Saraf Omra. As a result of these restrictions, UNAMID was unable to deliver critical aid supplies to affected communities during the height of the violence, and people in the Al-Sref Beni Hussein city were deprived of life-saving assistance.¹³² Due to the hurdles placed on access, in mid-February, the U.N. announced that "it will not be able to continue providing food and other relief unless the relevant U.N. officials in North Darfur are permitted to travel to the area to register those in need of assistance and to carry out a comprehensive assessment."¹³³

Responding to the New Face of Atrocity in Darfur

A scattered power base in Khartoum means that the Sudanese government no longer speaks with one voice. Instead, middle men and profiteers within the ruling party have gained influence and control. These elements see clear economic benefit from intense periods of violence, particularly in places along Sudan's marginalized periphery. Chaos and accompanying forcible demographic change allows these profiteers to consolidate their economic control over the country's natural resources, particularly in the marginalized periphery. Undoubtedly, the Sudanese government's continued facilitation of conflict and uncertainty in Darfur serves as a broader illustrative example of its problematic approach to governance.

Recommendations

To address the root causes of this latest period of violence, the international community should engage more substantively on the situation in Darfur. We recommend the following steps:

1. The United States and other partners should support forces for democratic transformation within Sudan as they seek to secure a comprehensive peace in Darfur.

The problems in Darfur are complex and deserve proportional solutions. However, until the core issue of governance reform in Khartoum is achieved, the center-periphery marginalization will continue to perpetuate conflicts in Sudan. Careful attention should be paid that no solution sought comes at the expense of addressing this more foundational step towards lasting peace throughout the country. The United States, European donors, and other interested members of the international community must escalate the scope and nature of existing support to civil society groups and forces seeking democratic reform from within Sudan. Expanded funding for training and capacity building could play an instrumental role in strengthening Sudanese ability to push for expanded political space and a national dialogue which in turn will be central to efforts to address the root causes of conflict in the country.

The United States, Qatar, and other influential African countries should facilitate inclusive and comprehensive peace negotiations and a ceasefire with the SRF and New Dawn signatories in order to reach lasting solutions for all of the conflicts in Sudan. Unfortunately, the Doha-based Darfur peace process is tangential to realities on the ground in Sudan. Real progress will require shifting support away from the co-opted Doha process and towards a new framework for negotiation. Signing deals with splinter groups is counterproductive and the Darfur Regional Authority lacks both the legitimacy and capacity to push for a comprehensive peace on their own. Instead, a robust coalition, drawing on youth, civil society leaders, religious authorities and the New Dawn signatories must be forged.

2. The United States and other partners should pressure the Government of Sudan to grant humanitarian agencies unfettered access to all areas of Darfur.

The government of Sudan should allow unhindered humanitarian access to victims of fighting in Jebel 'Amer, al-Sref and other areas affected by government instigated inter-tribal clashes. Areas affected by continued fighting between the Sudanese armed forces and rebel militias also demand humanitarian interventions. The new head of the UNAMID, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, should push for the type of unrestricted access envisioned by the original status of forces agreement. For UNAMID to effectively implement its civilian protection mandate, the government of Sudan must be forced to extend all required authorizations and facilitation to the hybrid peacekeeping mission.

3. Both the international community and the government of Sudan should support the implementation of pledges made at the reconciliation conference between the Beni Hussein and Abbala tribes.

The international community must offer its support to the implementation of the outcomes of the reconciliation conference between the Beni Hussein and the Abbala tribes. The Abbala group's recent recognition that they have been co-opted and used by the government of Sudan is an important development. Support to the reconciliation process could help shape the discourse on how the recent clashes are understood. The government's narrative, emphasizing the inter-communal tensions must be rebutted. Building a peaceful Darfur will require a commitment to helping communities come together, in spite of past relations. Members of the Abbala, the Beni Hussein, and other groups engaged in recent inter-tribal fighting should be encouraged to resolve disputes over land use and tenure, and new resources such as gold fields through peaceful means. Community outreach programming that focuses on Sudan's historically instrumentalized nomadic Arab communities will be an essential element of this reconciliation process.

4. The United States and other partners should exert pressure to ensure that those responsible for human rights abuses during this latest wave of atrocities are held accountable.

The pressing need for justice and accountability for human rights violations and atrocities committed during this latest wave of clashes cannot be ignored. The international community must find a way to build the capacity of either domestic or mixed judicial mechanisms to increase the legitimacy of the justice sector in Darfur and promote the rule of law. Many of the acts described in this report likely constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity under the terms of the Rome Statute. The Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court should explore additional arrest warrants under the existing Security Council authorization.

5. The international donor community, including European allies and Qatar, should work to promote Darfur's economic growth through sustainable and self-sufficient development.

Darfuris should be supported in their efforts to look for their own communities' "golden opportunity." Jebel Marra boasts orchards. Wadi Saleh has fertile agricultural land. Nomadic pastoralist groups have herds worth millions. External commitment to helping Darfuris exploit these resources responsibly and cooperatively will help avoid economically motivated power struggles amongst the region's groups. The wealth sharing provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur outline the minimal standard, but a more robust commitment to training and capacity building will also help Darfuris engage in longer-term diversified and sustainable development. Unfortunately, funds earmarked for developing Darfur through the Doha process are currently being monopolized by the

government of Sudan. The recommended financial support to spur greater development in Darfur should empower Darfuri stakeholders and decentralize control to avoid allowing the government of Sudan from misusing donor funds in a similar fashion.

6. Jewelers, gold refiners, and gold exchanges should list Sudan as a “conflict affected” originating point under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s due diligence guidelines for supply chains, triggering the Gold Supplement due diligence procedures.

Companies in the gold supply chain should add Sudan to their list of countries identified as high-risk originating points for gold. Jewelers and gold exchanges should conduct additional due diligence on gold coming out of Sudan to avoid engaging in the conflict gold trade. Most gold industry groups such as London Bullion Market Association, or LBMA, and Responsible Jewelry Council, or RJC, already condition recognition of gold refiners on the “conflict-free” designation of their products.

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About the Satellite Sentinel Project and its Partners

SSP launched on December 29, 2010, with the goals of preventing a return to full-scale civil war between northern and southern Sudan as well as detecting, deterring and documenting threats to civilians along both sides of the border. SSP focuses world attention on pending incidents of mass violence in the Sudans and uses imagery and analysis to generate rapid responses on human rights and human security concerns.

The project works like this: A constellation of five DigitalGlobe satellites passing over Sudan and South Sudan captures imagery of possible threats to civilians, detects bombed and razed villages, or notes other evidence of mass atrocities or pending mass violence. SSP analyzes the imagery, open source data, and information from sources on the ground to produce reports.

The Enough Project contributes field reports, policy analysis, and communication strategy and, together with Not On Our Watch, pressures policymakers by urging the public to act. DigitalGlobe provides high-resolution satellite imagery and analysis conducted by the DigitalGlobe Analytics Center.

SSP is the first sustained public effort to systematically monitor and report on potential hotspots and threats to human security in near real-time.

SSP is primarily funded by Not On Our Watch. To support the Satellite Sentinel Project, donate at www.satsentinel.org.

Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, South Sudan, eastern Congo, and areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Enough conducts intensive field research, develops practical policies to address these crises, and shares sensible tools to empower citizens and groups working for change. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to www.enoughproject.org.



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Satellite Sentinel Project