



3 November 2006

**Sixth periodic report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
on the situation of human rights in the Sudan**

29 October 2006: Attack on Villages around the Jebel Moon Area



Issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in
cooperation with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan.

Summary

In the morning of 29 October 2006, hundreds of armed men in green camouflage uniforms, described by the local people as “*janjaweed*”, launched a brutal attack against several villages and one IDP camp south and west of Jebel Moon area in West Darfur. The attack resulted in approximately 50 civilian deaths. At the very least, the attacks demonstrated the Government of Sudan’s continued failure to disarm militia in Darfur, and at worse its use of militia forces that target civilian populations.

Eyewitness testimony and lists provided by the communities indicate that the majority killed were young male children and elderly men. According to information gathered, 26 children were killed, and of those 21 were under the age of ten. Eight of the men killed were reportedly 70 years old or older. At least 15 other residents in the area were injured but not killed. During the attacks a large number of livestock was looted by the attackers and property, including furniture and clothing, was also stolen. As many as 7,000 people in the area were likely affected by the violence. Some remained in the area while others fled to the south, across the border to Chad, and in other directions.

The attacks affected at least eight different villages: Hashaba, Khabesh, Hila Awini, Kiskis, Damara, Agra, Haskanita, Taif and Hijilija IDP camp. The population of these villages is mainly of African origin. The first three villages were the most gravely affected by the attacks in terms of the number of dead and injured. Twenty-two people from Khabesh were killed and five injured; twelve people from Hijilija IDP camp were killed and one injured, and eight people from Hashaba were killed and two injured. Three people from Hila Awini were killed, and six more people were killed and eight others injured from the other villages. This pattern of attacks against civilian populations has been observed on numerous previous occasions in Darfur.

International human rights law and humanitarian law prohibit targeting of civilians, pillaging of civilian property, and forced displacement. The government of Sudan has a dual responsibility: not to participate in such actions and to protect people from such attacks. There is no information to indicate that the government made attempts to prevent or respond to the attacks. Soldiers at a nearby army base in Guzmimo did not take action to protect the civilians. Local authorities in West Darfur knew there was a month long build up of militia in the area but they took no effective action to avert the threat. There are also troubling indications that Sudanese military personnel may have participated in the attacks, based on descriptions of some of the attackers.

The attackers were described by witnesses as being Arabs and from the Gimir tribe. Most rode on horseback and wore green camouflage military uniforms. They attacked with Kalashnikovs, assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and other weapons according to eye witness testimony. It appears their total number was between 300 and 500. Some of the attackers wore new uniforms; some were seen with green, yellow and red patches, or with red and yellow patches on their uniforms. Witnesses also saw three men with the insignia of commissioned Sudanese Armed Forces military officers.

In response to the 29 October attacks the Governor of West Darfur established an Investigative Committee and promised to prevent similar events in the future. However, the Government of Sudan has initiated such investigations in the past, but many appear not to have been completed and there is no consistent attempt to carry out detailed, transparent, and timely investigations and bringing perpetrators of large scale attacks to justice.

I. Background and Context

1. The Jebel Moon area is populated mostly by people of the African Jebel Messeriya tribe. It is a mountainous area that is a strategic location for armed forces. Currently, it is controlled largely by members of two rebel groups (SLA and JEM) who are not supportive of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The government considers the civilian population in and around the Jebel Moon area to be providing food, water, and shelter to the rebel groups who carry out attacks against the government. In turn, there have been at least two large attacks in the Jebel Moon area since September 2005 that have targeted the civilian population.
2. On 28 September 2005, armed Arab militias attacked Aro Sharow IDP camp, located south west of Jebel Moon. The attack lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. By the end of the attack around 27 people were killed and approximately 40 houses were torched. The Sudanese Armed Forces are located about two kilometers from Aro Sharow and within 300 meters from Guzminu village. Soldiers appear to have done nothing to intervene to prevent the violence. On 18 November 2005, there was another attack which resulted in heavy loss of civilian property and eight civilians injured.
3. The attacks on 29 October 2006 took place at a time when the corridor north of El-Geneina up to the Jebel Moon area posed serious human rights and humanitarian access challenges. Insecurity from banditry and organized attacks against Sudanese civilians has made travel from Geneina up to Silea extremely dangerous, especially since early September 2006. Civilians from non-Arab ethnic origins have been regularly targeted, killed, abused, abducted or systematically harassed by armed Arab men. Humanitarian organization convoys have also been so frequently targeted that the UN has declared it a no-go road for UN staff unless accompanied by an AMIS armed escort. There were at least seven separate incidents since 26 September 2006 that have resulted in at least six deaths, seven people injured, and two people being physically beaten. The attacks have taken place on roads and in villages.

II. Details of attacks on Khabesh village, Hijilija IDP camp, and Hashaba village on 29 October 2006

4. The attack on the small village of Khabesh started at sunrise on 29 October 2006. It is estimated that 600 people live in the village. Of the three attacks described in detail in this report it was the one that resulted in the most civilian casualties. This is perhaps due to the fact that the villagers tried to fend off the attackers with guns and killed six of them. However, they were outmatched by the hundreds of armed men on horses and camels who overran their village and killed men and many young children. The presence of arms within communities is not necessarily an indication that rebels were present.
5. Witnesses stated that the total number of attackers was over 500 and they approached from the east, west, and south. According to eye witnesses *"They surrounded the village and said, 'Come out slaves. We've come to destroy you.' Then they started shooting. Some people tried to escape and some stayed in the village and tried to hide."* One witness recalled *"Those who remained inside their houses were killed."* Another reported hearing the attackers saying, *"Kill them," "slaughter them,"* and *"don't let anyone escape."* Another described several brutal murders they witnessed: *"Four children escaped in a group and ran under a tree for protection. An attacker came and shot at them, killing one of the children. Another group of three children (5, 7, and 9 years old) were running in a line. The 5-year-old fell down and was shot dead. Another one of the boys stopped and told the attacker, 'you killed this child,*

please let me go.” The attackers said, “If I let you go you will grow up. I will not let you go.” Then the attacker shot the boy. A woman had a four year-old baby and it was pulled from her and shot dead in front of her”.

6. Hijilija IDP camp hosts over 5,000 people, according to witnesses and victims, the camp was attacked by a large group of armed Arab and Gimir men around 6:30 am on 29 October 2006. An eye witness said, *“The attackers approached from the southern direction of the camp. From a far off distance they launched rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and other projectiles and then they came closer and started shooting.”* One witness stated that many of the residents were at home at the time of the attack. A victim who was shot during the attack recalled: *“It was early and we don’t know how to tell time. Maybe it was 5:00 or 6:00 or 7:00 am. We were preparing tea. I heard shooting and shouting. I went outside my house and got shot in the hand and leg. I saw the man who shot me. He was in a camouflage military uniform on a horse. Many people attacked and they covered the whole camp. They had Kalashnikovs, assault rifles, and RPGs. I saw a woman get shot and her two children were also killed”.* One witness described hearing an attacker say *“We’ve come to kill you, destroy you, and loot your things”* He continued, *“People ran in all different directions and the attackers gained control of the camp and looted cattle and property.”* IDPs were killed in, or near their homes and also whilst fleeing the camp. The attackers reportedly looted everything of value; they loaded it onto camels and then left. A person who was hiding heard one of the attackers in a conversation via Thuraya phone say *“Ok, you won Khabesh and we won Hijilila.”*

7. Hashaba village was attacked early in the morning on 29 October 2006 by approximately 60 armed men wearing green camouflage uniforms. The attack lasted until about 9:00 am. The attackers looted all the livestock (cows, goats, etc.) and other valuables including the furniture and women’s clothing. A man who buried five people killed in the attack recounted what he witnessed: *“It was early in the morning. Kids were still sleeping. That’s when a large group of militia on horses and camels approached our village and started attacking the village. In the beginning of the attack they shot at the village with an RPG, but luckily it exploded at a distance before the village. They had new guns and were wearing new green camouflage uniforms. They would kill whoever they found in their way. Those who saved their life were lucky because they ran out of village. A group of attackers were attacking the people and chasing animals towards the northern side and the rest were loading onto their camels property and goods that they looted during the attack”.*

8. In response to the 29 October attacks the Governor of West Darfur established an Investigative Committee and promised to prevent similar events in the future. However, the Government of Sudan has initiated such investigations in the past, but many appear not to have been completed and there is no consistent attempt to carry out detailed, transparent, and timely investigations and bringing perpetrators of large scale attacks to justice.

III. Recommendations

9. **The Government of Sudan must urgently:**
 - **Conduct an impartial, timely and transparent investigation into the attacks on 29 October 2006. The investigation should aim to collect evidence to identify and prosecute those who planned, orchestrated, and conducted the attacks. It should also identify those responsible for the failure to prevent the attacks by allowing**

armed militia to gather in the area and the Sudanese Armed Forces failure to protect the population during the attacks. The results of the investigation should be made public. Legal action should be taken against those found to be responsible and the victims of the attacks should be compensated.

- Respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Implement their obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions.
- Fulfill its responsibility to protect civilians and take action to implement its commitment to disarm the militia operating in the region.
- Facilitate access to the affected areas for delivery of medical and humanitarian assistance. Secure roads from the affected areas to El Geneina so the injured can access necessary medical services.

10. The International community must urgently:

- Provide the necessary resources to the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) so it can fulfill its mandate to protect civilians. This must include fulfilling financial pledges, promises of logistical support and sending additional contributions from troop contributing countries.
- AMIS should, under the relevant cease agreements, effectively monitor and report on ceasefire violations and contribute to the prevention of attacks on civilians.
- Urge the parties to end all hostilities and abide by the existent ceasefire agreements and assist them to resolve the conflict through an inclusive dialogue and political process.