



## **Sudan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 June 2010**

### **Information on the AI Fur tribe, in particular the Tunjer ethnic group. Information on its traditions, culture, society, membership, history and current situation in Sudan. Areas inhabited by the Fur.**

A January 2009 document from the *UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, under the heading 'Background and context', states:

"The incident at Kalma IDP camp should be analysed in the context of the long-standing tension between the residents of the camp and the Government of Sudan regarding control of the camp. South Darfur governmental authorities have frequently asserted that there is a presence of political, criminal and armed movement elements within the camp. Kalma camp was established in February 2004. As one of the largest camps in Darfur, the total population of Kalma camp is estimated at approximately 80,000 individuals: the majority being from the Fur, followed by the Dajo, Zaghawa Massalit, Birgit and Tunjer tribes. The camp is one to two kilometres' long and extends seven kilometres' along the railway track from east to west." (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (23 January 2009) *Eleventh periodic report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Sudan Killing and injuring of civilians on 25 August 2008 by government security forces: Kalma IDP camp, South Darfur, Sudan*, p.3)

A January 2005 *Human Rights Watch* report, under the heading 'Background: Dar Fur: Wadi Saleh, Mukjar and Shattaya localities', notes:

"Deleig and Mukjar localities (mahalias) in West Darfur state and neighboring Shattaya locality in South Darfur state are in the central belt of Darfur. This area, which includes the Jebel Marra mountains and the land around it, is among the most fertile agricultural areas in Darfur. Historically, the area is part of the dar or homeland of the Fur tribe, from which Darfur takes its name and whose sultanate ruled most of Darfur for several hundred years before the British captured the area in 1916.

Some of the key towns there--Deleig, Garsila, Mukjar, Shattaya and Kailek—are located in a U or semi-circle shape around a cluster of hills or small mountains (jebel) called the Sindu Hills, which straddle the border between West and South Darfur. The Fur tribe is mainly agricultural and rural village-based, although many communities also own livestock and some are semi-nomadic or transhumant. The larger towns, such as Garsila and Mukjar, are administrative centers and have a greater ethnic mix due to the presence of merchants, traders, military forces and migrants from other parts of Sudan." (Human Rights Watch (21 January 2005) *Targeting the Fur: Mass Killings in Darfur*, p.4-5)

The *Encyclopedia of African Peoples* refers to the Fur as follows:

“The Fur are a people of northern Sudan who live in the westernmost province of Darfur – the land of the Fur...The Fur have long lived in a centralised state, perhaps as early as 2000 years ago” (Baily, Nancy et al (2000), *Encyclopedia of African Peoples*, The Diagram Group, London, p.89)

A book published in 1998 by *Ann Mosely Lesch* refers to the Fur as follows:

“The Fur, who live in the far west in the area centered on the mountains of Jabal Marra, have a strong tradition of independence...The sedentary Fur controlled major desert trade routes, and intermingled for centuries with migrants from west Africa, Arab traders and holy men from the Nile valley, and other indigenous peoples. Pride in their special history and culture remains strong among the Fur” (Mosely Lesch, Ann (1998), *The Sudan, Contested National Identities*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, p.18)

An entry on the Fur in *The Peoples of Africa – An Ethnohistorical Dictionary* states:

“The Fur (Keira) live in western Sudan, primarily in the Darfur area. Their population today is approaching 800,000 people. They speak a language that is part of the Nilo-Saharan language family...the Fur also find themselves being increasingly acculturated to Arab values” (Olson, James S. (1996) *The Peoples of Africa – An Ethnohistorical Dictionary* Westport Greenwood Press, p.183)

An undated paper on the Fur from *Minority Rights Group International*, under the heading ‘Profile’, notes:

“Fur are a people of the Darfur region in western Sudan and the former Islamic Sultanate of Darfur. ‘Darfur’ means ‘home of the Fur’ in Arabic. As sedentary farmers, Fur rely mainly on the cultivation of millet during the rainy seasons. They are Muslim and long ago adopted Arab names and, to some extent, dress. Fur communities are matrifocal, so Fur elders are surrounded by daughters and their daughters’ husbands” (Minority Rights Group International (undated) *Fur*)

## References

Baily, Nancy et al, (2000), *Encyclopedia of African Peoples*, The Diagram Group, London

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<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/11thOHCHR22jan09.pdf>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

#### **Sources consulted**

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Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

International Crisis Group

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

IRIN News

Lexis Nexis

Minority Rights Group International

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UNHCR Refworld

UN News Service

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

United States Department of State