

Sudan: Satellite Images Confirm Villages Destroyed ^[1]

ICC Suspect Involved In Attacks Remains At-Large

June 18, 2013

(Nairobi) – Satellite images confirm the wholesale destruction of villages in Central Darfur in an attack in April 2013 by a militia leader sought by the International Criminal Court, Human Rights Watch said today.

The images show the town of Abu Jeradil and surrounding villages in Central Darfur state almost completely burned down, Human Rights Watch said. Villagers who fled the area told Human Rights Watch in May that Sudanese government forces, including the militia leader Ali Kosheib, had attacked the area ^[2]. More than 42 villagers are believed to have been killed and 2,800 buildings destroyed.

“Satellite images show the total destruction of villages during the April attacks in Central Darfur,” said Daniel Bekele ^[3], Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “How can the Sudanese authorities claim there’s nothing they can do when their own security forces were involved and the war crimes suspect Ali Kosheib is on the loose?”

Human Rights Watch analysis of satellite imagery found that more than 2,800 buildings were probably burned down in Abu Jeradil and four neighboring villages, which is 88 percent of all buildings in the area.

Abu Jeradil (Focus Area 1)

Move the slider to compare images from before and after the violence.





Abu Jeradil (Focus Area 2)

Move the slider to compare images from before and after the violence.



The deliberate destruction of civilian property as well as structures and goods indispensable to the survival of the civilian population are war crimes, Human Rights Watch said.

Community leaders from the Salamat Arab ethnic group who had fled to eastern [Chad](#) ^[4] told Human Rights Watch that more than 42 civilians were killed and scores injured in Abu Jeradil, 30 kilometers south of Um Dukhun, on April 8. More than 100 civilians were killed in what appear to have been coordinated attacks on dozens of Salamat-populated towns and villages in the area that began on April 5 and lasted for several days.

Multiple witnesses said that large numbers of heavily armed men fired weapons indiscriminately, burned homes and shops, and stole livestock and other goods including food, clothes, beds, and

water pumps. The villagers said the attackers included members of the government's Central Reserve Police and Border Guards – auxiliary forces that absorbed former pro-government militia.

Salamat community leaders identified the attackers as ethnic Misseriya, Taisha, and Rizeigat Arabs, who arrived in dozens of government land cruisers. They said they fought back with rifles but were far outnumbered and outgunned. They said the attackers were armed with 106mm recoilless rifles, anti-aircraft weapons, heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and other weapons. Human Rights Watch could not independently verify these descriptions.

The attacks and fighting between the groups has since spread to South Darfur state, Human Rights Watch said. The Sudanese government has dismissed the fighting and other recent inter-ethnic violence as beyond its control, despite the evidence that government authorities were involved in the attacks. Violence has driven some 300,000 people in Darfur from their homes so far in 2013, according to United Nations estimates, of which inter-ethnic fighting accounts for close to 200,000.

Human Rights Watch reiterated its call to the Sudanese government to ensure a full and impartial investigation of the attacks and prosecute those responsible for abuses, and to surrender Kosheib immediately to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. On June 4, authorities in Central Darfur told Sudan Radio Service they were conducting an investigation into the attacks and Kosheib's role, but findings have yet to be announced.

Ali Kosheib, a *nom de guerre* for the militia leader Ali Mohammed Ali, was spotted at the scene of attacks on Abu Jeradil. Kosheib faces a 2007 arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes in West Darfur in 2003 and 2004. Though briefly arrested in 2007 and 2008, he was released and currently holds a high-ranking position in the Central Reserve Police, an abusive force widely known as "Abu Tira."

The April attacks caused widespread destruction of civilian property and the mass displacement of more than 30,000 people to Chad, where they are awaiting humanitarian assistance amid the onset of the rainy season. The border area remains under threat from armed men in the area, making any attempt by the villagers to return home very dangerous.

Sudan's regular armed forces did not intervene to stop the fighting or protect civilians around Abu Jeradil, Human Rights Watch said. Sudanese authorities have on several occasions prevented the African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur (UNAMID), which has a mandate to protect civilians, from accessing the area.

“Sudanese authorities should immediately rein in pro-government forces and hold those responsible for serious abuses to account,” Bekele said. “A crucial first step would be to surrender Ali Kosheib to the International Criminal Court”

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[3] <http://www.hrw.org/bios/daniel-bekele>

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