

"No one on the earth cares if we
survive except God and sometimes
UNAMID"

The challenges of peacekeeping in Darfur



About the International Refugee Rights Initiative

The International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) enhances the rights of those excluded from state protection as a result of forced displacement, conflict, discriminatory violence and statelessness. IRRI believes that strengthening the rights, capacities and democratic participation of these communities—refugees, the forcibly displaced, the conflict-affected, the stateless and those suffering violent discrimination on the basis of their political status—is essential to building just, peaceful and flourishing states and communities. IRRI redresses imbalances in power that fuel violent exclusion of vulnerable populations from protection through:

- tackling the root causes of exile, statelessness, discriminatory violence, and conflict through which state protection is lost;
- enhancing the agency and protection of those who are forcibly displaced or threatened with displacement; and
- promoting the re-building of just and inclusive communities in which genuine citizenship is forged and displacement and exile comes to an end.

IRRI grounds its advocacy in regional and international human rights instruments and strives to make these guarantees effective at the local level.

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Background to the Paper

This report is based on field research conducted by anonymous researchers in Sudan. Lucy Hovil and Olivia Bueno were the primary drafters of the report, with input and support from Andie Lambe. The team would like to express enormous gratitude to all those who gave their time and participated in the study.

Front cover photo: The UN flag lowered to half-mast at the UNAMID base in El Geneina, West Darfur. October 2013

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Contents

Executive Summary	4
Recommendations	5
Background	7
Conflict in Darfur	7
International Response	8
Peace Processes and Peacekeeping	10
Current Deployment of UNAMID	13
Civilian perspectives on UNAMID	14
Positives of UNAMID intervention: attention, limited protection and humanitarian assistance	14
Failures of UNAMID: lack of protection, mandate confusion and allegations of misconduct	16
Displaced but still unprotected	17
Why are UNAMID troops unable to protect civilians?	18
Mandate confusion	21
Peace keeping or peace enforcement?	22
Assistance with return, and the need for compensation	26
Misconduct	26
Too soon to leave: “We are not well protected. But there would be no force to protect us without UNAMID forces.”	27
Conclusion	28

Executive Summary

This month, June 2016, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC or the council) will consider the renewal of the mandate of the joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Sudan. After eight years on the ground, questions are increasingly being asked about the future of the mission, and about how and when it will, inevitably, exit. It is clear that the government of Sudan believes that the time for the force to leave is now. Following the referendum on the administrative status of Darfur that took place in April 2016, the government is asserting that not only is the situation on the ground secure, but that the peace process is completed.

However, these assertions do not reflect realities on the ground, nor the views of the people UNAMID are tasked with protecting. To date, the UNSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) have indicated that any changes to the mandate should be tied to the original benchmarks laid out by the UN Secretary General in 2012, which revolve around four key areas: the peace process, security, rule of law, and humanitarian aid and support to recovery.¹ However, as the mandate renewal approaches, these issues will doubtless be raised again, and positions are likely to shift. In this context, the following report seeks to insert a voice into the debate that is all too often absent, the voice of the civilians that UNAMID is mandated to protect.

This report, the second of a three-part study by the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI), on peacekeeping across Africa, presents civilian perspectives on peacekeeping forces in Darfur.² It does not claim to provide a comprehensive assessment of the mission, but rather an analysis of UNAMID as seen by some of the civilians they are mandated to protect. Interviews took place in April 2016 in North,³ Central,⁴ West⁵ and South Darfur.⁶ The team of researchers were unable to travel to East Darfur due to insecurity. A total of 57 interviews were conducted with a cross-section of gender, age category, and social position within each community, most of them displaced. The report also builds on IRRI's experience since 2005 as secretariat of the Darfur Consortium, now named the Sudan Consortium,⁷ coordinating advocacy to push for international action on Darfur, including in the area of peacekeeping.

¹ The initial benchmarks are laid out in "Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur," 16 October 2012, although these have subsequently been refined. Available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/771 (accessed 17 June 2016).

² The first study focused on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) "Protecting some of the people some of the time: Civilian perspectives on peacekeeping forces in South Sudan." IRRI December 2015 available at <http://www.refugee-rights.org/Publications/Papers/2015/ProtectingSomeofthePeopleFINAL.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016).

³ In North Darfur, researchers visited Kutum town and Kassab IDP camp, Tawila town and Rwanda IDP camp, and Zamzam, Al Salaam and Nifasha IDP camps around El Fasher.

⁴ In Central Darfur, interviews were conducted in Zalingei town and the IDP camps of Himaidia, Hasahisa and Khamsa Dagaig. Ongoing fighting limited further travel in the area.

⁵ In West Darfur, interviews took place in the villages of Kirinding, Morny and El Geneina town.

⁶ In South Darfur, in the villages of Shangiltobay, Giraida, Labado and Bilail as well as Nyala IDP camps of Kalma, Dirajj, Otash and El-Salam.

⁷ For more information on the consortium, please see the Consortium website, <http://www.sudanconsortium.org>.

The research is intended to enable actors involved with peacekeeping – from international NGOs advocating for reform within the UN and UN policy makers in New York, to peacekeepers on the ground – to better understand how the peacekeeping operation might respond to the needs of the population, albeit recognising that the mission is operating under severe constraints as a result of resource restrictions and the political environment in which it is operating.

The findings make it clear that, despite the many shortcomings of UNAMID, this is not the time for the UNSC and the AU PSC to walk away from Darfur. The conflict continues – indeed, since 2014 it has re-escalated – and people continue to be displaced. In a context in which the government is seen by civilians as a key source of insecurity for millions, UNAMID remains, for many, their best hope for protection.

However, the findings also show that civilians hope for much more than the mission is currently delivering. While arguably a little protection might be better than no protection at all, UNAMID needs to do far more. It needs to be more effective in providing the protection that civilians so desperately need, and do more to create conditions identified in its own benchmarks. Of particular importance in achieving this, according to those interviewed, is a robust disarmament process. Ultimately, improved protection would allow people to return in safety and the mission to withdraw without leaving the population in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

Recommendations

In order for UNAMID to live up to its potential, urgent action must be taken to ensure that the mission not only continues, but is strengthened. In order to achieve this, IRRI makes the following recommendations.

To the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council:

- As recommended by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, renew the deployment of the mission with its current mandate for an additional 12 months without any reduction in personnel levels.
- Increase engagement between member states and the mission to ensure that existing gaps in equipment and personnel are promptly addressed.
- Ensure that the mission has the full political support of the UNSC and that all council members support the mission in fulfilling its objectives.
- Redouble efforts to achieve an inclusive, negotiated political settlement to the Darfur conflict.
- Provide additional political backing to the mission to ensure that they are in a stronger position to negotiate with the government to prevent inappropriate restrictions of UNAMID's activities, for example restrictions on movement in contravention of the status of forces agreement.

To the government of Sudan:

- Redouble their efforts to achieve an inclusive, negotiated political settlement to the Darfur conflict.

- Ensure that all UNAMID personnel, including troops and civilian personnel, have the full range of movement and access that is provided for in the status of forces agreement.
- Quickly process visa applications made by the UN for mission personnel. In general, such requests should be approved unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. Where visas are refused, clear reasons should be given.
- Ensure that customs processing for all mission equipment and supplies is expeditious and that needed items are received by the mission in a timely manner.
- Comply with UNSC Resolutions calling for the disarmament of *Janjaweed* militias and others.

To the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations:

- Work with troop contributing countries to ensure that all deployed troops have the necessary training and fully understand their protection mandate in advance of their deployment.
- Ensure the mission fulfils all aspects of its mandate and stated goals.
- Ensure that UNAMID responds quickly and robustly to threats to civilian protection.
- Improve the quality of its monitoring and reporting, particularly in relation to human rights issues, to contribute to ensuring that the international community has access to the high-quality, accurate information needed to make appropriate policy decisions. Ideally, this information should be made public. In all circumstances, UNAMID must ensure that the information represents an accurate picture of the situation on the ground and does not distort the facts.
- Engage with the Darfuri community on the ground to build trust and manage expectations.

Background

Conflict in Darfur⁸



The burnt village of Um Ziefa in Darfur, Sudan. 12 December 2004.
©Brian Steidle for US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Despite claims by the government of Sudan that peace has been achieved in Darfur, violence continues. Indeed, a major offensive launched against rebels in Central Darfur's mountainous Jebel Marra region in 2016 has caused considerable suffering and displaced more than 100,000 people between January and March alone.⁹

Conflict in Darfur is rooted in historical cycles of violence and injustice that persist today. The current phase of conflict started in 2003, when the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice

and Equality Movement (JEM) took up arms against the government of Sudan. This led to a vicious counteroffensive by government forces supported by the *Janjaweed*, a militia drawn primarily from camel breeders of North Darfur who operated in North and West Darfur with the support of the Sudanese government, and formed into a full paramilitary wing that undertook joint operations with the government's Popular Defence Forces (PDF), another paramilitary force. Civilians were the primary target of these attacks and villages were burned, people killed and women raped with the apparent aim of driving civilians off their land.

Displacement has been a deliberate strategy of the war. Since 2003, almost half the population have been forcibly displaced, many more than once, fleeing either to neighbouring countries, to urban areas within Darfur or elsewhere in the country. Since the height of the violence in 2003-2004, and despite two signed peace agreements in 2006 and 2011, violence continued, albeit at a lower level.¹⁰ Those fighting this war have gradually splintered into smaller groups, with an increase in fighting among the *Janjaweed* and between other former government collaborators. As a

⁸ This section, updated to reflect developments since that research, includes an abbreviated version of a longer history provided in a previous IRRI paper. For more details, see IRRI, "Darfurians in South Sudan: Negotiating belonging in two Sudans," May 2012, available at <http://www.refugee-rights.org/Assets/PDFs/2012/DarfuriansinSouthSudanFINAL1.pdf>. (accessed 20 June 2016)

⁹ "Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur," 22 March 2016, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/268 (accessed 18 June 2016).

¹⁰ The 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, also known as the "Abuja Agreement" available at <http://www.un.org/zh/focus/southern Sudan/pdf/dpa.pdf>, (accessed 18 June 2016), and the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, also known as the "Doha Agreement" or the DDPD, available at https://unamid.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/ddpd_english.pdf, (accessed 18 June 2016).

result, the landscape has become increasingly complex as intercommunal conflict has intersected with fighting between government and rebels, and with criminality fuelled by the chaos.

In 2014, the pattern of violence changed again, when the government of Sudan launched major offensives against JEM and the faction of the SLA led by Minni Minawi.¹¹ These offensives, known as “Operation Decisive Summer”, led to a massive increase in the level of fighting and drove the number of attacks on civilians up to levels not seen since the height of the violence in 2003-2004.¹²

Since the conflict began, at least 300,000 people are estimated to have been killed (although casualty data is not regularly updated), and around 3 million have been driven from their homes (approximately 2.6 million of whom are internally displaced within Sudan¹³ and approximately 350,000 of whom have fled to Chad).¹⁴ Camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) within Darfur are primarily located around urban areas and are administered by the few humanitarian agencies allowed by the government to operate in Darfur. Their location and the longevity of this displacement has led to rapid urbanisation, with all the associated problems this brings. While some of the displaced have returned to their homes during the course of the war, particularly when there has been a lull in the fighting, most have not. Those who have returned, as IRRI previously documented, have been mostly driven by terrible conditions of displacement rather than by a realistic expectation of safety on return. In fact, many have returned at considerable risk to themselves.¹⁵ The government of Sudan is now indicating that they will “put an end to the displacement in Darfur before 2017,”¹⁶ which has led to widespread fear among Darfuris that, in the event that UNAMID exits, the government will shut down IDP camps by force.

International Response

As with many protracted conflicts, the international response to the war in Darfur has metamorphosed from a relatively strong engagement (albeit ultimately one that has failed to resolve the conflict), to a situation in which Darfur has become increasingly peripheral. In the early days, international actors drew upon multiple tools from the toolbox of potential international responses to mass atrocities. Following the declaration in September 2004 by the then-US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, that the Sudanese government’s actions in Darfur were genocide,¹⁷ the

¹¹ “Special Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” 8 June 2016, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/special-report-secretary-general-and-chairperson-african-union-commission-african-union>, (accessed 18 June 2016).

¹² IRRI analysis of data available from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (www.acleddata.com).

¹³ UNHCR, “Sudan: Refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and others of concern to UNHCR, available at <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,TCD,,573ad3274,0.html> (accessed 21 June 2016).

¹⁴ World Bulletin, “Turkey provides aid to refugees in Chad,” 20 June 2016, available at <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/174030/turkey-provides-aid-to-refugees-in-chad> (accessed 21 June 2016).

¹⁵ IRRI, “‘It is a Joke:’ Ongoing conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region and controversies over ‘return,’” 2014, available at: <http://www.refugee-rights.org/Publications/Papers/2014/ItsAJoke.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016)

¹⁶ “Special Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” 8 June 2016, at para. 15, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/special-report-secretary-general-and-chairperson-african-union-commission-african-union> (accessed 18 June 2016).

¹⁷ BBC, “Powell declares genocide in Darfur,” 9 September 2004, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3641820.stm> (accessed 20 June 2016).

UNSC set up an Independent Commission of Inquiry into Darfur,¹⁸ which found evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes and recommended a referral of the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which the UNSC duly did in March 2005. Since then the ICC has issued arrest warrants against Sudan's President Al Bashir, two other government officials, a *Janjaweed* commander and three rebel leaders.¹⁹ The government of Sudan has refused to cooperate with the ICC and hand over any of the named suspects, although two of the rebel leaders charged did surrender themselves. Governments in the region and the African Union have also objected to, and refused to comply with, the arrest warrant against President Al Bashir. Despite 11 findings of state non-compliance with the ICC transmitted to the UNSC, in the words of ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, the Council has been "consistent in its conspicuous silence."²⁰

In addition to the use of international justice mechanisms, a number of other strategies have been undertaken locally, nationally and internationally to try and end the war in Darfur, including peace negotiations, the deployment of international peacekeepers (as discussed below) and the imposition of sanctions.²¹ However, the international response to the situation in Darfur was further complicated by efforts to bring an end to the north-south axis of the conflict and implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which was signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the government of Sudan in 2005. Although the CPA has been criticised for focusing primarily on addressing North/South animosity, it did integrate a democratic reform programme that reflected a holistic and *national* understanding of conflict in Sudan. However, this wider agenda proved fragile and was further undermined when the SPLM leader, John Garang, was killed in 2005 and power within the SPLM shifted to those inclined towards secession. Although the SPLM was nominally part of the Sudan central government, it was unable to address the growing conflict in Darfur, and ultimately the complex and carefully crafted CPA was whittled down to a secession vote in 2010. Since secession, conflict has broken out in Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Sudan and, more recently, in South Sudan, showing that carefully crafted agreements are only as good as their implementation.

¹⁸ "Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004," 25 January 2005, at para. 573, available at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8191.doc.htm> (accessed 17 June 2016); UNSC Resolution 1593, 31 March 2005, available at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/85FEBD1A-29F8-4EC4-9566-48EDF55CC587/283244/N0529273.pdf> (accessed 17 June 2016).

¹⁹ For more information on status of charges and proceedings in these cases, see <http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC/Situations+and+Cases/Situations/Situation+ICC+0205/> (accessed 17 June 2016).

²⁰ Address of ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to the UN Security Council, 9 June 2016, available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54187#.V2Pmibt97IU> (accessed 17 June 2016).

²¹ In April 2004, talks between the government in Ndjamena, Chad, the SLM/A, and JEM agreed to a ceasefire and the disarmament of the *Janjaweed*. The Darfur Peace Agreement between Khartoum and SLM/A leader, Minni Arko Minawi, was signed in Abuja in 2006. While other parties came on board later, a lack of commitment, particularly on the side of government, meant that the *Janjaweed* were not disarmed and, instead, continued their assaults against civilians, with new waves of violence and displacement subsequently occurring as rebel groups splintered into different factions.

Peace Processes and Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping forces are not intended to address the root causes of conflict, but rather to create some protection and stability while political negotiations either run their course or are implemented. It is widely acknowledged that “peace operations must be part of an effective political strategy and peace process, not a substitute for them.”²² It is often said that peacekeepers cannot function when there is no peace to keep. In this context, the history of peacekeeping in Darfur is closely tied to the history of peace negotiations.

The first peacekeeping mission in Darfur, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), was deployed shortly after the Ndjameña ceasefire agreement was signed on 8 April 2004 and was explicitly mandated to monitor and observe compliance with that agreement, as well as facilitate humanitarian relief.²³ The mission, the largest ever deployed by the AU, grew to 7,000 peacekeepers by September 2005, and while the deployment was recognised for making some contribution to security in Darfur, it was widely criticised as insufficient.²⁴ In the words of a UN official, “the AU has been very effective in decreasing violence in areas where it maintains presence in the Darfur region. It has also prevented some attacks from happening through local negotiations on the ground. However, it has not prevented insecurity due to its inability to deploy in large numbers.”²⁵

An AU assessment of the force in 2006 pointed to some successes: “AMIS deployment in Muhajeriya halted the SAF [Sudan Armed Forces] advance on this town, which would have resulted in the displacement of around 40,000 IDPs”, and that the continuous presence and patrol operations in Kalma camp “have had a significant impact; indeed there have been no reported incidents against the IDPs since this intervention started.”²⁶ On the other hand, the AU mission was stretched thin, with only 7,000 peacekeepers mandated to cover an area the size of France. The mandate of the



A member of the rebel movement Sudan Liberation Army (Abdul Wahid faction), May 2012

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²² Paul D. Williams, “Lessons Learned from Peace Operations in Africa,” *Africa Security Brief*, March 2010, available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133696/AfricaBrief-3.pdf> (accessed on 17 June 2016).

²³ Peace and Security Council, “Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Darfur,” 12 January 2006, available at: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Sudan%20%20PSCPRComm\(XLV\).pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Sudan%20%20PSCPRComm(XLV).pdf) (accessed 17 June 2016).

²⁴ Roba Sharamo, “The African Union’s Peacekeeping in Darfur, Sudan,” 13 November 2006, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/african-unions-peacekeeping-experience-darfur-sudan>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Peace and Security Council, “Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Darfur,” 12 January 2006, available at: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Sudan%20%20PSCPRComm\(XLV\).pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Sudan%20%20PSCPRComm(XLV).pdf) (accessed 17 June 2016).

mission was also criticised as too limited, focusing on monitoring ceasefire violations rather than robust action to protect citizens. It also faced logistical and financial difficulties, and in some cases itself came under attack.²⁷ In light of this, by early 2006, the AU PSC was supporting the handover of the force to the UN.²⁸

The UN, however, was reluctant to take up the mantle of peacekeeping in Darfur without a peace agreement. Negotiations were already ongoing in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, and pressure for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission, with a strong protection of civilians mandate, was building, drawing support from, among others, the Save Darfur movement in the United States. In this context, intense pressure was placed on the Abuja negotiators to close a deal. In May 2006, the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed. It was hardly an ideal peace agreement – two of the three main rebel factions, JEM and the SLA faction led by Abdelwahid al-Nur, failed to sign, leaving only the SLA faction led by Minni Minawi and the government as signatories. The agreement did not stop the fighting between the non-signatory parties and soon came under fire for its lack of implementation.

Nonetheless, the agreement did pave the way for the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1706 in August 2006, mandating the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Darfur.²⁹ However, the resolution floundered on the issue of host government consent (which was not forthcoming) and the force was ultimately never deployed. Meanwhile, the DPA was rapidly falling apart and the credibility of the UN was being eroded. Pressure mounted on the UN once again to take action.

In July 2007, the UNSC passed Resolution 1769, authorising the joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) with a mandated troop capacity of 26,000.³⁰ Six months later, however, the force still stood at 9,479 uniformed personnel, most of whom were ex-AMIS forces³¹ and IDPs began to express frustration with the mission. As one IDP told the Sudan Consortium at the time:

When UNAMID first came, we wanted to give them a chance – surely they must improve on AMIS. But after a few weeks it was clear that there was no difference. They would prefer to stay in their base and pretend nothing is happening. We need troops who will protect us – who will leave their base and chase the Janjaweed, escort women when they collect wood and stop the bandits attacking the aid workers.³²

Over the years, as the violence continued, the UN and others continued to call for negotiations. In 2009, talks began again in Doha, Qatar. The process concluded with the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) in July 2011 by the Sudanese government and an umbrella of weaker rebel movements/factions known as the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM). Like the earlier DPA, the DDPD was weakened by a lack of consensus around it. Worse

²⁷ See for example, National Council of Churches, "NCC and NGO's in U.S., U.K. and France urge UN Resolution on Darfur," 22 July 2005, available at <http://www.nccusa.org/news/072105Darfur.html>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

²⁸ Eki Yemisi Omorogbe, "Can the African Union Deliver Peace and Security?" (2011) 16 *J. Conflict & Sec. L.* 35-62, p 50.

²⁹ UN Security Council Resolution 1706, 31 August 2006, available at:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1706\(2006\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1706(2006)), (accessed 17 June 2016).

³⁰ Sudan Consortium, "Putting People First: The Protection Challenge Facing UNAMID in Darfur," June 2008, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A04FDA0B34B69819C12574950037327E-Full_Report.pdf (accessed 20 June 2016).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

“Sometimes government puts pressure on [UNAMID] – like it keeps threatening to get them out of Sudan. It tells UNAMID that the Darfur crisis after the Doha Agreement is over.”

still, the insurgent movements had minimal military and political presence in the region. On paper, the DDPD included initiatives for power sharing, compensation for refugees, and greater respect for human rights.³³ Yet despite these progressive aspects, the major rebel factions never signed, and the parties that did sign repeatedly failed to meet targets for implementation. This lack of implementation only reinforced the view that fighting is the only option. The Darfur Regional Authority (DRA), set up to serve as one

of the primary bodies through which the agreement was to be implemented and designed to serve as the political voice of Darfuris, was dominated by the LJM. Furthermore, accusations of anti-democratic practices within the LJM led to the group’s splintering, further slowing down the implementation.³⁴ In addition, as previous IRRI research has demonstrated, people in Darfur had little faith in the process.³⁵ Therefore, while the signing of the DDPD should have opened up space for return by allowing for greater representation of Darfuris in local and national government, in practice this did not happen.

In April 2016, the government of Sudan organised a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur allowing Darfuris to choose between maintaining the current structure of five states and returning the region to a single administrative unit, as provided for in the DDPD. Although the conditions for voting were clearly not conducive to a fair election (violence and displacement were ongoing and the opposition boycotted the vote), the government claimed a high voter turnout with 98% of votes allegedly in favour of maintaining the status quo.³⁶ The government is now using the results of this referendum as evidence that the war is over, announcing that the implementation of the DDPD is complete and the DRA is to be disbanded when its current mandate ends this July.³⁷ Indeed, one government official reportedly said that the referendum was an opportunity to show that “the page on the Darfur crisis has now been turned.”³⁸

The same narrative that the war is over is also being used to bolster the case that it is time for UNAMID to go, a reality that is not lost on civilians living in Darfur. As one IDP interviewed for this research said, “Sometimes government puts pressure on [UNAMID] – like it keeps threatening to get them out of Sudan. It tells UNAMID that the Darfur crisis after

³³ Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, available at <http://unamid.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=11060> (accessed 18 June 2016).

³⁴ Sudan Tribune, “Sudan: Divisions Threaten Unity of Darfur Peace Partner Group,” 3 April 2014, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201404040827.html> (accessed 20 June 2016).

³⁵ IRRI, ““It is a joke”. Ongoing conflict and controversies over “return” in Sudan’s Darfur region.” 2014, available at <http://www.refugee-rights.org/Publications/Papers/2014/ItsAJoke.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016).

³⁶ IRRI, “Referendum in Darfur: Closing chapter or travesty of justice,” 29 April 2016, ., available at: <http://www.refugee-rights.org/blog/?p=1067>, (accessed 20 June 2016)

³⁷ “Special Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” 8 June 2016, at para 26-27, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/special-report-secretary-general-and-chairperson-african-union-commission-african-union>, (accessed 18 June 2016).

³⁸ IRRI, “Referendum in Darfur: Closing chapter or travesty of justice,” 29 April 2016, available at: <http://www.refugee-rights.org/blog/?p=1067> (accessed 20 June 2016)

the Doha Agreement is over.”³⁹ Thus it is clear that with the signing of the Abuja agreement as one bookend starting the process of deployment of UN troops, the government of Sudan is trying to make the “completed” implementation of the DDPD another bookend, to mark the end of the deployment. The question is whether or not they will be successful in selling this narrative internationally.

Ultimately, therefore, none of the agreements reached to date have offered a solution to the conflict. They have been marred by a lack of genuine commitment to peace on the part of the government of Sudan; a lack of inclusive representation of different factions from within Darfur – and indeed its citizens; and a general delinking of the conflict in Darfur from the conflict in other areas of Sudan and the wider process of reform that is urgently needed in Sudan as a whole. Meanwhile the government’s announcement in 2014 of a process of “national dialogue” has so far proved to be little more than a smokescreen in a context of increased economic and political pressure.⁴⁰

Current Deployment of UNAMID

Today, UNAMID is the largest peacekeeping operation in the world.⁴¹ However, from its initial authorisation of nearly 26,000 its force strength has been reduced to just under 16,000.⁴² Of these, 13,809 are currently deployed.⁴³ It is mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, allowing for the use of force in some circumstances. The protection of civilians is at the centre of the mission’s mandate, with the mission called upon to “contribute to the protection of civilian populations under imminent threat of physical violence and prevent attacks against civilians, within its capability and areas of deployment.”⁴⁴ The mission is also tasked with “contributing to security for humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, contributing to the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, and monitoring and reporting on the situation along the borders with Chad and the Central African Republic.”⁴⁵

Eight years since its deployment, however, conflict in Darfur not only rumbles on but appears to be on the increase. From the start, UNAMID has faced enormous political and logistical challenges including the inability to fully deploy, attacks on the mission and continuous government obstruction. The government’s unwillingness to cooperate with UNAMID has also led to the downsizing of the mission and ongoing discussions of an exit strategy – a discussion which is generally used by the government of Sudan as a threat against the ability for the force to continue to operate

³⁹ Interview with IDP man, El Geneina, West Darfur, 15 April 2016.

⁴⁰ For instance, in May 2014, the National Intelligence and Security Services arrested Sadig Al-Mahdi, the leader of the Umma Party, for criticising the Rapid Response Forces (a new incarnation of the *Janjaweed*). In June 2014, it arrested Ibrahim Al-Shiekh, the leader of the Sudanese Congress Party for what it called spreading of “lies.”

⁴¹ UNAMID background, available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/background.shtml> (accessed 20 June 2016).

⁴² “UNAMID facts,” <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/facts.shtml>, (accessed 20 June 2016).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ As set out in paragraphs 54 and 55 of the “Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson the African Union Commission [S/2007/307/rev.1], 5 June 2007, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2007/307/rev.1, (accessed 17 June 2016).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

in Sudan. Although to date the UNSC has tied the exit strategy to measurable benchmarks, positions on the council have been divided. Some members are more critical of Sudan due to the human rights violations and abuses it has committed (including aerial bombardments of civilians) and its lack of cooperation with both the ICC and UNAMID; while others (including Russia,, who has ended economic sanctions and forgiven Sudan's debt, and China) believe Sudan is working hard to promote stability in the country.⁴⁶

Civilian perspectives on UNAMID

The following section presents the key findings that resulted from the interviews with civilians, the majority of whom were living in IDP camps. While there is some recognition that the presence of UNAMID has, on balance, been better than the alternative of no mission, there was a clear assessment of its failings. Their conclusion, however, remained unequivocal: in a context in which civilians remain fundamentally unprotected by their own government, UNAMID not only should remain but should do far more to bring out about the peace that has so long been awaited.

Positives of UNAMID intervention: attention, limited protection and humanitarian assistance

Despite the harsh criticism that UNAMID has received over the past ten years, much of it justified, the research did identify a number of ways in which UNAMID's intervention was viewed as positive. First, civilians pointed to physical protection provided by UNAMID, particularly in and around displacement sites. While the general consensus was that the level of protection was woefully inadequate, there was an appreciation that UNAMID provided protection in some circumstances. In addition, a number of IDPs recognised that UNAMID was playing a role in reporting on, and bringing attention to, the situation in Darfur.

With regard to protection, there was reference to protection in and around the IDP camps – often in contrast to the lack of protection in their home areas. As one man said, “Yes, I feel secure in the IDP camp because there is UNAMID.”⁴⁷ In addition, a woman told IRR that: “When thieves stole cows from the IDP camp we pursued them a long distance and



New IDPs in Um Baro, 27 January 2015
©Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID

⁴⁶ Sudan Tribune, “Russia Willing to Assist in Obtaining Debt Relief – Envoy,” 8 December 2010, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201012090752.html>, (accessed 21 June 2016).

⁴⁷ Interview with IDP man, El Geneina, West Darfur, 15 April 2016.

reached them but they fired at us with guns. So we returned quickly and told UNAMID forces, who pursued them until they brought the cows back to their owners even though the thieves escaped.”⁴⁸ Another man told of how UNAMID had defended Kalma IDP camp when it was attacked by government militias (Kalma has been attacked on a number of occasions so it is not clear to which incident the speaker was referring).⁴⁹ “If they hadn’t intervened, there would be no Kalma today.”⁵⁰

Many of those interviewed also talked positively about having access to the UNAMID human rights office, where they could report incidents. One man told of how UNAMID had helped his family when he was arrested: “When we have been arrested as opponents of Doha Peace agreement by security elements while our families did not know where we were, they told UNAMID about the case. UNAMID found our detained place and informed them about our health situation.”⁵¹ Another man, when asked if he knew of UNAMID, answered, “Yes, I have experience with them: when a civilian was killed we went and told them about it. First they failed to come because of government restrictions, then they insisted till they reached the place where the person was killed. Then they made a report.”⁵²

Although many Darfuris interviewed for this research expressed frustration that the mission placed reporting over action, this speaker and others, recognised an important role for reporting. One respondent said, “These forces exist to know the condition of IDPs.”⁵³ Another said that they “raise daily reports to the UN Headquarters in order to find the suitable decision.”⁵⁴ While this reporting might be woefully inadequate, at least it is putting some pressure on the international community to respond. As Abdelrahman Gasim, an important leader in the Darfur Bar Association, said: “UNAMID’s departure will have a huge impact – not when it comes to protecting civilians, but in bringing attention to Darfur.”⁵⁵

Others recognised a positive role for UNAMID in providing messages of peace, training and information. One IDP noted that UNAMID had been useful in “organising workshops on health care, gender based violence and tribal reconciliation. They have also mediated in some tribal conflicts from time to time.”⁵⁶ Another said, “Yes, there are

⁴⁸ Interview with IDP woman, Rwanda IDP camp, North Darfur, 18 April 2016.

⁴⁹ Attacks by militia forces in Kalma took place September 2013 (see Radio Dabanga, “30 Militiamen Storm Kalma Camp, South Darfur,” 18 September 2013, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309180411.html>, (accessed 17 June 2016)), January 2015 (see Radio Dabanga, “RSF militia sows terror in Kalma camp, South Darfur,” 19 January 2015, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/rsf-militia-sows-terror-in-kalma-camp-south-darfur>, (accessed 17 June 2016)) and May 2016 (see Radio Dabanga, “Kalma camp resident injured in South Darfur militia attack,” 2 May 2016, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/kalma-camp-resident-injured-in-south-darfur-militia-attack>, (accessed 17 June 2016.))

⁵⁰ Interview with IDP man, Zalingei, Himaidia IDP camp, Central Darfur, 19 April 2016.

⁵¹ Interview with IDP man, Rwanda IDP camp, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

⁵² Interview with IDP man, Geneina IDP camp, West Darfur, 15 April 2016.

⁵³ Interview with IDP woman, Morny village, West Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁵⁴ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam Camp, North Darfur, 8 April 2016.

⁵⁵ Nuba Reports, “Flawed but Crucial: Sudan Pushes for UN’s Peace Force to Leave Darfur,” 25 April 2016, available at <http://nubareports.org/flawed-but-crucial-sudan-pushes-for-uns-peace-force-to-leave-darfur/>, (accessed 18 June 2016).

⁵⁶ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam IDP camp, North Darfur, 5 April 2016.

good things that they did, like workshops on human rights, on protection on dangerous diseases.”⁵⁷ Another said, “UNAMID has played a big role in delivering messages spreading the culture of peace.”⁵⁸

Finally, there was acknowledgement that UNAMID forces have assisted in the delivery of humanitarian assistance – albeit assistance that is severely inadequate: “There are many good things they have made like construction of schools in some areas. Also they provide paramedics in some hard situations. Of course, it is never enough.”⁵⁹ Another woman noted that “these forces has distributed some assistance to the population in the camp,” noting that she had received a blanket and a plastic container for transporting water.⁶⁰ There was also recognition that UNAMID plays a role in facilitating humanitarian assistance, with many respondents describing UNAMID’s role in escorting humanitarian convoys. For example, one woman said: “Sometimes when the aid caravans need protection, these forces accompany them to provide protection against the *Janjaweed* who are everywhere ready to loot them.”⁶¹ Another man said, “In some cases, UNAMID helps WFP [the World Food Programme] and the Red Crescent in the transportation of humanitarian assistance to isolated areas.”⁶² Thus although the humanitarian assistance is inadequate, IDPs recognise that UNAMID has played a role in making what little there is available.

It is worth noting that the lack of humanitarian assistance is also something that is very much recognised by the UN. Humanitarian organisations suffer from similar government obstruction to those faced by the mission itself, in terms of visas, customs clearance and access restrictions. According to the UN and AU, five humanitarian agencies left Darfur between August 2015 and April 2016, either because they were closed down by the authorities or because financial and operational difficulties became insurmountable.⁶³ Inevitably, this exit of key agencies has exacerbated chronic deficits in service delivery.

Failures of UNAMID: lack of protection, mandate confusion and allegations of misconduct

The positive stories recounted above were more than outweighed by the frustration felt by those interviewed. The primary reason for this frustration was that not enough was being done to ensure their safety. In addition, many criticised the mandate of the mission, reflecting that the mission does not conform to their aspirations and views of what they believe should be done. Finally, there were a number of allegations of misconduct levelled against the mission.

⁵⁷ Interview with IDP man, Rwanda camp, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

⁵⁸ Interview with IDP man, Kalam area, South Darfur, April 2016.

⁵⁹ Interview with IDP man, Geneina IDP camp, West Darfur, 17 April 2016.

⁶⁰ Interview with IDP woman, Rwanda IDP camp, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

⁶¹ Interview with IDP woman, Kassab camp, North Darfur, 13 April 2016.

⁶² Interview with IDP man, Um Baro, North Darfur, 6 April 2016.

⁶³ “Special Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” 8 June 2016, at para 50, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/special-report-secretary-general-and-chairperson-african-union-commission-african-union>, (accessed 18 June 2016).

Displaced but still unprotected

Civilians pointed to several areas in which they believe that UNAMID is specifically failing. The most fundamental problem that people pointed to was their inability to protect civilians. The fact that they remain trapped in IDP camps – some for over a decade – is evidence in itself of their lack of protection. Others have tried to return home but have once more been re-displaced. It is important to note that all of those interviewed blame their current predicament first and foremost on the government of Sudan and their proxy militias, which they see as the primary instigator and ongoing source of insecurity in Darfur. Within this context, the extent to which UNAMID was seen as responsible for their ongoing plight varied between interviews.

“I don't feel secure and I don't even know who to look to for my security... Even peacekeeping forces don't provide security.”

Some of those interviewed were less harsh in their criticism. As one man put it, “[UNAMID] are about 50% effective in achieving their objectives... We see them handling their guns on the streets keeping peace, and yet Darfur is still not secure. We need more of them.”⁶⁴ The desire for UNAMID to be far more active and effective was expressed over and over again: “We want UNAMID to be far better;”⁶⁵ “UNAMID is an international force that is meant to keep peace and security in the whole of Darfur but they are very weak in keeping both peace and security.”⁶⁶

As noted above, UNAMID itself has repeatedly come under attack and has lost a significant number of troops during the course of its deployment. This hardly inspires confidence from the civilians that they are mandated to protect: “They are not able to protect themselves so how could they protect civilians?”⁶⁷ In the words of another, these “forces cannot even protect themselves, and this can be seen in the frequent looting of UNAMID vehicles.”⁶⁸ In fact, the mission has come under attack on numerous occasions. These attacks began early on, on 8 July 2008, seven peacekeepers were killed and 20 were injured when an unidentified militia attacked a UNAMID police and military patrol in North Darfur.⁶⁹ Since the inception of the mission, 233 peacekeepers (including 154 military) have lost their lives.⁷⁰

In other cases, interviewees expressed concern not only about the ability of UNAMID to act, but also about its willingness to act. As one man said, “When our IDP camp was attacked by robbers... we called [UNAMID] but they never came.”⁷¹ Another said, “These forces couldn't keep peace and security for citizens. As a good example, we here

⁶⁴ Interview with IDP man, Nyala, South Darfur, 6 April 2016.

⁶⁵ Interview with IDP woman, Kass Camp, Central Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁶⁶ Interview with IDP man, Kassab camp, North Darfur, 6 April 2016.

⁶⁷ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam IDP camp, Nyala, South Darfur, 14 April 2016.

⁶⁸ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam IDP camp, Tawila, North Darfur, 5 April 2016.

⁶⁹ Sudan Consortium, “Putting People First: The Protection Challenge Facing UNAMID in Darfur,” June 2008 available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A04FDA0B34B69819C12574950037327E-Full_Report.pdf (Accessed 20 June 2016).

⁷⁰ UNAMID, “UNAMID Facts and Figures,” May 2016, available at <http://unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-facts-and-figures>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

⁷¹ Interview with IDP woman, Belil IDP camp, South Darfur, 10 April 2016.

in Rwanda camp, we suffered from repeated attacks and these forces were very close, but they couldn't provide any help, also the repeated attacks happened in Tawila market. These forces were affected but couldn't interfere."⁷² These incidents had led to a sense of despair. As one woman in South Darfur said, "I don't feel secure and I don't even know who to look to for my security... Even peacekeeping forces don't provide security."⁷³

Why are UNAMID troops unable to protect civilians?

When asked about the reasons for UNAMID's lack of effectiveness, most people pointed to two specific factors: the extent to which the government is seen to control their activities; and, to a lesser extent, the force's lack of resources. As one woman explained in the case of the former, "UNAMID are forces that operate according to a United Nation programme in general. But secretly they operate according to government guidelines. So they don't keep peace for the civilians."⁷⁴ Or as another woman said, "They cooperate with the authorities according to their mandate, which makes it look like the government is in charge of UNAMID."⁷⁵

In particular, there was recognition that the government was controlling their movements: "The government blocks the movement of the peacekeeping forces and humanitarian organisations."⁷⁶ "UNAMID is under the control of government. Without the permission of government, it can't go and patrol."⁷⁷ "The government never allows them to respond quickly to events. It always delays them."⁷⁸



Darfur from above.
© Anonymous

The obstruction by government has also been acknowledged by the UN as a major impediment to the effective functioning of the mission. The government of Sudan consented to the deployment of the mission begrudgingly, and has been obstructive from the start. For instance, only six months after the deployment of UNAMID, the Sudan Consortium reported that the government of Sudan "continues to delay agreement with troop- and police-contributing countries and since January, only 600 troops have been added to the ex-AMIS forces."⁷⁹ Eight years later, not much has changed. In

⁷² Interview with IDP man, Rwanda camp, Tawila, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

⁷³ Interview with Darfuri woman, Wad Hajam village, South Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁷⁴ Interview with IDP woman, Kass IDP camp, Central Darfur, 11 April 2016.

⁷⁵ Interview with IDP woman, Himaidia IDP camp, Central Darfur, 18 April 2016.

⁷⁶ Interview with IDP man, Geneina IDP camp, West Darfur, 17 April 2016.

⁷⁷ Interview with IDP man, Kass IDP camp, Central Darfur, 11 April 2016.

⁷⁸ Interview with IDP man, Zalingei-Hasahisa IDP camp, Central Darfur, 15 April 2016.

⁷⁹ Sudan Consortium, "Putting People First: The Protection Challenge Facing UNAMID in Darfur," June 2008 available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A04FDA0B34B69819C12574950037327E-Full_Report.pdf (accessed on 20 June 2016).

a June 2016 report on UNAMID, the UN Secretary-General reported that the government of Sudan continues to delay and deny visas requests from the UN for recruited staff and that this has significantly hampered operations. Thirty-nine visas were rejected, including for “such crucial senior positions as the Principal Humanitarian Affairs Officer and the Senior Women’s Protection Adviser.”⁸⁰ This has contributed to the understaffing of certain key sections such as human rights, civilian protection and security.⁸¹ The government has also delayed customs clearance of key mission equipment and supplies in Port Sudan, further hampering the mission's operations and diverting much needed human resources to the management of that relationship.

An additional consequence of the strained relationship with the government has been the restriction on air and ground movement, particularly to conflict areas, most recently in Jebel Marra. According to the UN, the majority of these restrictions occur in violation of the status of forces agreement which was signed with the government.⁸²

These access restrictions have a serious impact on the capacity of the mission to carry out its mandate. Dafuris pointed to the reported mass rape in Tabit, in late 2014, as a stark example of a situation in which the government controlled UNAMID's access: “The purpose of UNAMID is to keep peace, protect citizens and provide security. However, they only do their work according to government guidelines, so they fail to protect. The events of Tabit village in North Darfur are a clear example. Government did not want them there. And there are other examples.”⁸³

When the incident of mass rape was reported in Tabit, UNAMID attempted to reach the village, but initial investigators were denied access. Approximately one week after the attack, the UN did finally manage to access the village, but only in the presence of Sudanese security forces. A UNAMID staff member present told Human Rights Watch: “People were afraid... [UNAMID] was not allowed to speak to people in private. Military and intelligence officers followed us everywhere.”⁸⁴

As noted above, government restrictions are recognised by the mission, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission as a serious obstacle to the mission's operations. In order to redress this, the UNSC and the AU PSC as well as their member states must provide additional political backing to the mission to ensure that they are in a stronger position to negotiate with the government on these issues.

Others did not accept lack of resources as an excuse. As one man living in an IDP camp in North Darfur said, “They have no clear objective. They cannot do the work of peacekeeping. I do not know why they are not capable in

⁸⁰ “Special Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” 8 June 2016, at para 45, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/special-report-secretary-general-and-chairperson-african-union-commission-african-union>, (accessed 18 June 2016).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, at para 48.

⁸³ Interview with IDP man, Hasahesa IDP camp, Central Darfur, 7 April 2016.

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Mass Rape in North Darfur: Sudanese Army Attacks against Civilians in Tabit,” 11 February 2015, available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/02/11/mass-rape-north-darfur/sudanese-army-attacks-against-civilians-tabit>, (accessed 16 June 2016).

providing peace and security and stability for the displaced persons. They have the military equipment, vehicles and the money to achieve that.”⁸⁵ One woman, when asked to reflect on why the mission was unable to protect civilians, responded, “I don’t know, but I think that they are ‘cowards’.”⁸⁶

Situations in which UNAMID peacekeepers failed even to attempt to protect civilians were also recounted by Aicha Elbasri, a former spokesperson of the mission who, on 9 April 2014, published an article blowing the whistle on the mission.⁸⁷ She specifically pointed

to an incident in which she claims that UNAMID troops did not make any effort to stop hostile troops and armed insurgents from abducting 31 displaced persons that UNAMID were transporting.⁸⁸ The events in Tabit, described above, were also referred to by several of the interviewees as clear evidence of UNAMID’s inability to protect civilians.

“UNAMID is under the control of government. Without the permission of government, it can’t go and patrol.”

As elsewhere, the difference in the performance of troops is likely to be tied to the varying quality of the troops. A proactive commander with trained and equipped troops can do much more than one who is fearful of engagement, either due to contradictory directives from home, or as a result of being inadequately trained or equipped. From the perspective of Darfuris, these differences were seen largely along national lines. One IDP said, “They are not equal. Rwandan forces are better than Egyptian forces. Ethiopians are scared of *Janjaweed*.”⁸⁹ A number of interviewees expressed distrust of African troops generally, an attitude that may be linked to the fact that UNAMID troops were meant to be more effective than AMIS troops, but ended up being mostly the same troops, just wearing different hats. A number of interviewees expressed a desire to see Western troops deployed. In the words of one Darfuri, “the society looks at the African and Arab forces with suspicion, to promote their performance there should be European and American forces to realise peace on the ground.” In the words of another, “[t]heir performance would be better if these forces were replaced by European or American forces or adding them together.”⁹⁰

While it is far from clear that other troops would address the complex challenges that are facing UNAMID, it *is* clear that the UN needs to address the disparity between the quality of troops contributed by various troop contributing countries in order to ensure the effectiveness – and, therefore, the credibility – of the mission overall.

⁸⁵ Interview with IDP man, Zamzam IDP camp, North Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁸⁶ Interview with IDP woman, Kebkabiya, North Darfur, 6 April 2016.

⁸⁷ Aicha Elbasri, “We Can’t Say All that We See in Darfur,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 April 2014, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/09/we-cant-say-all-that-we-see-in-darfur/>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Interview with IDP man, Zalingei, Himaidia IDP camp, Central Darfur, 22 April 2016.

⁹⁰ Interview with IDP man, Um Baro, North Darfur, 6 April 2016.

Mandate confusion

In addition to this mixed assessment regarding the efficacy of UNAMID, there was much confusion over UNAMID's mandate. In some cases, this stemmed from misunderstandings. In others, it would appear to be an expression of frustration that the mandate of the mission is not what Darfuris would like it to be.

Many of those interviewed claimed that the mandate of the mission was unclear. As noted above, some IDPs criticised the mission as lacking a clear objective.⁹¹ Or, as another man said, "UNAMID are multinationals or a hybrid force that is spread out in all IDPs camp but without goals."⁹² Of course, the mission has a clearly elaborated mandate and the view that the mission does not have clear goals may stem from a failure in communication with the population. Indeed, many of those interviewed said that they had little interaction with the mission. It may also stem from tensions between the stated goals of the mission and the behaviour of the mission on the ground, which is not always reflective of its mandate.



UNAMID Officers on patrol
©UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran

Some expressed the view that the mandate of the mission was simply to write reports. As one IDP stated, "their goal is to write reports to the UN without interfering in people's affairs."⁹³ "The big challenge of peace in Darfur is the inability of UNAMID to make changes in the ground. They have limited their duties to writing reports."⁹⁴ Of course, writing reports is a part of UNAMID's function – and, as noted above, can be an important function. However, it is by no means the only, or even the primary, part of its mandate. In some cases, Darfuris acknowledged that this was not as it should be. As one man said, "Yes there are some duties they are not performing such as collection of weapons, protection of IDPs. Their duties are stagnated in writing of reports."⁹⁵ Others were unequivocal in their criticism: "UNAMID is supposed to be here for peacekeeping and sending reports of what is happening, but they only send the reports and don't keep the peace."⁹⁶

⁹¹ Interview with IDP man, Zamzam IDP camp, North Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁹² Interview with IDP woman, Belil IDP camp, South Darfur, 10 April 2016.

⁹³ Interview with IDP man, Rwanda camp, Tawila, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

⁹⁴ Interview with IDP man, Geneina IDP camp, West Darfur, 15 April 2016.

⁹⁵ Interview with IDP man, Geneina IDP camp, West Darfur, 17 April 2016.

⁹⁶ Interview with IDP man, Zalingei, Hamidia IDP camp, Central Darfur, 22 April 2016.

However, even in writing reports the mission was seen by many to be compromised. One IDP told of how he believed that these reports were manipulated by the government: “Their reports, according to my knowledge, are first submitted to the government to be verified and then the unwanted parts are deleted, then submitted according to what the government wants. Therefore the reports are not factual in comparison with what is on the ground.”⁹⁷ Once again, events in Tabit support this perception. On 10 November, the mission released a widely criticised press release which, without mentioning the presence of government forces or the environment of intimidation, stated: “None of those interviewed confirmed that any incident of rape took place in Tabit on the day of that media report. The team neither found any evidence nor received any information regarding media allegations during the period in question.”⁹⁸ UNAMID has reportedly requested access to the site numerous times since the initial visit, but to our knowledge access has, to date, been denied.

This incident is emblematic of the debilitating consequences of the restrictions on movement put in place by the government of Sudan and also of the abject failure of the mission to conduct timely investigations and report publicly. More worrying, UNAMID not only failed to report, but actually issued the press release which, while not technically inaccurate, was certainly misleading. Some allege that this is not simply a misjudgement or misunderstanding, but rather a systematic practice on the part of the mission. Aicha Elbasri has alleged that the mission systematically under-reported violence and distorted information in an effort to whitewash the catastrophic situation in Darfur.⁹⁹

Therefore, whether a result of lack of access and information or a deliberate whitewash, it is clear that UNAMID has failed to use its presence to provide accurate and timely information about the situation on the ground. Its monitoring and reporting structures must urgently be improved.

Peace keeping or peace enforcement?

Another aspect of mandate confusion related to the role of the mission in protecting civilians. Many of those interviewed expressed a desire for UNAMID to be given a Chapter VII mandate, allowing them to use force in certain circumstances. As one man said, “UNAMID forces are inactive. They should be given jurisdiction under Chapter VII because the only mandate they have at the moment is self-defence and protection of properties.”¹⁰⁰ In the face of the threat posed by the armed state and non-state actors in Darfur, the threat or use of force was seen as fundamental to the protection of civilians: “UNAMID must use violent power to protect civilians.”¹⁰¹ In reality, the mission already has a Chapter VII mandate and is authorised to use force where civilians are under attack. However, for the most part,

⁹⁷ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam camp, Tawila, North Darfur, 5 April 2016.

⁹⁸ UNAMID, “UNAMID Verification Team Visits Tabit Village to Investigate Mass Rape Allegations,” 10 November 2014, available at <http://unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-verification-team-visits-tabit-village-investigate-mass-rape-allegations>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

⁹⁹ Aicha Elbasri, “We Can’t Say All that We See in Darfur,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 April 2014, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/09/we-cant-say-all-that-we-see-in-darfur/>, (accessed 17 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Darfuri man, Kutum town, North Darfur, 22 April 2016.

¹⁰¹ Interview with IDP man, Hasahisa IDP camp, Central Darfur, 7 April 2016.

the civilians interviewed did not perceive this, perhaps because, in practice, it is difficult for the mission to actually deploy force, or because they would like the mission to act more proactively than it is mandated to do.

The current mandate provides for civilian protection, but in a fairly limited set of circumstances, where civilians are under threat and the UN has capacity to respond. The mission's mandate does not provide for proactive action, for example going out and hunting down potential threats. Yet this is exactly what the people of Darfur are asking for from the mission. In the words of one IDP woman: "The UN is supposed to assist by imposing peace through military force and the disarming of the *Janjaweed* and militias and the outlaws."¹⁰² And this is not a new demand. As mentioned above, six months into UNAMID's deployment IDPs were asking for a force that would "chase the *Janjaweed*."¹⁰³

From the perspective of Darfuris, this appears as a clear extension of the need for civilian protection. As the logic went, if UNAMID is here to protect them, and they are being threatened by the *Janjaweed*, then it is UNAMID's job to disband and disarm them. Only then will they be safe. Traditional peacekeeping, however, is not intended to operate in this way. It is designed to bridge a gap between two forces that have already agreed on a basic framework for co-existence (a peace agreement) to ensure implementation. More robust action, deployed against the will of combatants, is often referred to as "peace enforcement." The language of the last interviewee about "imposing peace", which was repeated by many other interviewees, suggests a call for a peace enforcement mission.

Indeed, UNAMID is caught between the two positions. Although it has been mandated as a *peacekeeping* operation, it operates in an environment in which there is, essentially, no peace to keep. They have been tasked with overseeing agreements that are neither inclusive nor durable and clearly ineffective.

Prior to the deployment of UNAMID, advocacy groups did call for a "peace enforcement" mission. As a joint statement by US, French, and UK civil society in 2005 stated, "It is imperative that the UN Security Council give a mandate, through a new resolution, for the protection of Darfur's African population through **peace enforcement** in Darfur."¹⁰⁴ The Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre made a similar call, "DRDC calls for the deployment of a resourceful and strong military force in Darfurempowered to disarm the *Janjaweed* and apprehend their leaders and elements."¹⁰⁵ Western governments, under pressure from these lobby groups, began pushing for UN action, but came up against, among other things, reluctance to deploy without government consent, and Russian and Chinese vetoes. As a result, UNAMID as currently deployed is a compromise: under pressure to act as peace enforcers, but with only a mandate for peacekeeping.

¹⁰² Interview with IDP man, Zamzam IDP camp, North Darfur, 10 April 2016.

¹⁰³ Sudan Consortium, "Putting People First: The Protection Challenge Facing UNAMID in Darfur," June 2008 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A04FDA0B34B69819C12574950037327E-Full_Report.pdf (accessed 20 June 2016)

¹⁰⁴ The National Council of Churches, *Collectif Urgence Darfour*, Protect Darfur, and the Save Darfur Coalition, "Joint call on US, UK and France to sponsor a resolution for peace enforcement in Darfur," 22 July 2005, available at <http://www.nccusa.org/news/072105Darfur.html>, (accessed 18 June 2016). Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁵ Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, "Press Release," 1 October 2005, on file with author.

Others have recognised this problem. In 2014, James Sloan called UNAMID a “militarised” peacekeeping force, a force that attempts to take a more robust stance but continues to present itself primarily in the peacekeeping framework. He points out that this is problematic, because it raises the expectation of protection, but does not deliver.¹⁰⁶ There are several reasons why the use of force, would, in practice, be difficult. First, the mission would have difficulty in carrying this out in a comprehensive way. If they were to consider using force against the government, they would be both outnumbered and outgunned (the government of Sudan is estimated to have armed forces numbering 109,300, whereas the mission has less than 14,000 deployed.) Second, the obstructionism already faced by the government of Sudan would only be likely to increase if the mission were to more aggressively challenge government.

Sloan recommended that UNAMID be “replaced by an enforcement operation, led by a state or coalition of the willing, to restore peace and security and maintain them.”¹⁰⁷ Paul Williams, speaking more generally about guidelines for peacekeepers, says “They should generally avoid crossing what has been dubbed the ‘Darfur line’ – ‘deploying where there is no (real) consent of the state.’ If civilians are being systematically massacred by their own governments and international society wants to stop it, then a peace enforcement intervention rather than a peacekeeping operation is needed.”¹⁰⁸

While a peace enforcement operation may seem laudable and something that the people want, it also seems unlikely in the current political environment. In the meantime, there needs to be an honest appraisal about what UNAMID can deliver, while simultaneously pushing to provide the maximum protection possible under these circumstances.

One of the things that interviewees specifically called upon the mission to do is to disarm militias, in a context in which these groups were seen by many as one of the greatest immediate stumbling blocks to security. As one woman said, “Their first duty, in my view, is to disarm the militias.”¹⁰⁹ Others echoed this: “Peace will return only with the collection of weapons.”¹¹⁰ “The biggest challenge we have is that weapons are in the hands of government militias... So peace will only start after the collection of these weapons, which will allow people to go home.”¹¹¹ “The UNSC needs to make a resolution to give UNAMID mandate for the collection of weapons from the *Janjaweed*.”¹¹²

The question of whether or not UNAMID could (or, indeed, should) take a more active role in disarmament without greater “peace enforcement” capacity is complex. If such operations were to be conducted, they would need to be engaged in some kind of formal framework. Ideally this would be another negotiated political settlement, reinforcing the need for a truly inclusive and comprehensive settlement. Alternatively, such operations could be offered to support of government operations.

¹⁰⁶ James Sloan, “Peacekeeping in Darfur: A ‘Quagmire’ that We Cannot Accept,” 3 June 2014. <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/06/03/un-peacekeeping-in-darfur-a-quagmire-that-we-cannot-accept/> (accessed 19 July 2016).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Paul D. Williams, “Lessons Learned from Peace Operations in Africa,” *Africa Security Brief: A publication of the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies*, No. 3, March 2010, available at <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133696/AfricaBrief-3.pdf> (accessed 22 June 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Interview with IDP woman, Kassab camp, North Darfur, 13 April 2016.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Darfuri woman, Wad Hajam village, South Darfur, 10 April 2016.

¹¹¹ Interview with IDP man, Hasahisa IDP camp, Central Darfur, 7 April 2016.

¹¹² Interview with IDP woman, Mordassa, Dorti IDP camp, West Darfur, 18 April 2016.

It is also worth noting that the question of disarmament is further complicated by the fact that the *Janjaweed* have not participated in any of the agreements to date and so have neither accepted disarmament nor had the opportunity to negotiate the circumstances in which they would disarm. This has created practical difficulties as they are not



New IDPs in Sortoni, North Darfur – February 2016

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therefore required to report troop movements and character in the way that other parties are under the ceasefire agreements.¹¹³

Generally, the UNSC has appeared to take the view that disarmament of the *Janjaweed* should be the responsibility of the government of Sudan. UN Security Council Resolutions 1556 (2004), 1564 (2004) and 1591 (2005) all demand that the government disarm the *Janjaweed*. The UN Secretary-General and the government of Sudan also agreed that this was the government's responsibility in a July 2004 communique. In April 2016, the government of Sudan announced a

disarmament programme aimed at civilians. The operation is to be divided into two phases, a time-bound voluntary phase, followed by forcible disarmament.¹¹⁴ While this would appear to serve a laudable goal, there is ample reason to suspect the government's intention, given the failure to address this issue to date.

Meanwhile UNAMID, so far, has not expressed any intention of engaging with this process. Certainly, the very idea of civilian disarmament is likely to meet strong opposition from the population as long as the government is seen as a perpetrator of the violence rather than a protector of the people, which was the dominant view of those interviewed.

At the same time, while there was recognition that disarmament could reduce the scale of violence by limiting the means of violence, it was also recognised that to ensure sustainable peace and security, the drivers of conflict needed to be addressed – in other words, the conditions that allow such weapons to be directed at civilians in the first place. These drivers, including land allocation and political representation, also need to be addressed through a negotiated settlement. While existing peace agreements go a significant way towards addressing many of these issues – or at least create a framework for addressing them – a cohesive framework in which they can be fully discussed and agreed by all parties, and, more importantly, implemented, remains missing.

¹¹³ Darfur Consortium, "Ensuring Accountability and Protection of Civilians in Darfur: Next Steps for the Darfur Consortium," September 2005, p.16, available at http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2005/Nairobi.100405.pdf, (accessed 18 June 2016).

¹¹⁴ Sudan Tribune, "Sudan's FVP: disarmament will boost security in Darfur," 19 April 2016, available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article58681> (accessed 20 June 2016).

Assistance with return, and the need for compensation

Another area in which Darfuris expressed a desire for UNAMID assistance was with return and compensation – processes that were seen to go hand in hand. One IDP woman suggested that the UN should assist in “the rehabilitation of the destroyed infrastructure, the schools, health centres, plantations and belongings.”¹¹⁵ When asked about what UNAMID’s mandate should include, another IDP said, “the ruined village should be rebuilt and the displaced persons should be compensated.”¹¹⁶ Another suggested that the UN could “help in the return by providing the means of voluntary return, such as housing and security and then the return.”¹¹⁷

UNAMID is not actually mandated to do this rebuilding, as this is viewed as more appropriately the task of other branches of the UN. The mission is, however, meant to ensure “a secure environment for economic reconstruction and development, as well as the sustainable return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes.”¹¹⁸ In other words, the mission is not supposed to be engaged directly in reconstruction, but it is supposed to ensure that others agencies are able to do so.

Misconduct

Of even greater concern was the fact that a few interviewees talked of the peacekeepers not only failing to act, but deliberately causing harm, including through sexual exploitation. These allegations are not new. Indeed, they were reported in relation to the original AMIS mission. In the words of the Darfur Consortium, “there were credible allegations of rape, demands for sex in exchange for food and sexual harassment by AU soldiers (specifically at camps near El Fasher).”¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, they continued to be raised in this research. One man had this to say: “Peacekeepers sometimes tempt female IDPs in the camps. They exploit them immorally in their offices for long time and then give them money. They also give money to women to bring girls secretly to them in return for money.”¹²⁰ Another said: “My opinion is that these forces are useless because they have done nothing – only raising the prices of some goods like meat and bread, abusing girls and women by money, sexual abuse, taking advantage of the bad condition of these women to abuse them.”¹²¹ While few people mentioned it in the interviews, and IRRI was unable to independently assess the veracity of these allegations, they are not implausible given the scope of sexual violence allegations that have reportedly been committed by peacekeepers in other settings.¹²² Clearly, any such allegations

¹¹⁵ Interview with IDP woman, Kassab camp, North Darfur, 13 April 2016.

¹¹⁶ Interview with IDP man, Zamzam IDP camp, North Darfur, 10 April 2016.

¹¹⁷ Interview with IDP man, Rwanda camp, Tawila, North Darfur, 9 April 2016.

¹¹⁸ UNAMID background available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/background.shtml> (accessed 22 June 2016)

¹¹⁹ Darfur Consortium, “Ensuring Accountability and Protection of Civilians in Darfur: Next Steps for the Darfur Consortium: Key Findings and Conclusions,” September 2005, available at http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2005/Nairobi.100405.pdf, (accessed 18 June 2016).

¹²⁰ Interview with IDP man, Kass IDP camp, 6 April 2016.

¹²¹ Interview with IDP man, Un Baro, North Darfur, 6 April 2016.

¹²² Already in 2016, there have been 44 allegations of sexual assault committed by peacekeeping and special political missions have been recorded by the UN, with 39 being against uniformed personnel. See, UN, “Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the

must be urgently and thoroughly investigated and, if found to be true, the peacekeepers in question must be held accountable. Swift action must be taken to avoid further deterioration of the mission's image in the eyes of those that it is mandated to protect.

Too soon to leave: “We are not well protected. But there would be no force to protect us without UNAMID forces.”¹²³

Despite these multiple shortcomings, however, people were unequivocal that the situation would be worse if the mission were to leave. In a context in which UNAMID, at times, offers the only protection to civilians – albeit a form of protection that is highly dubious and compromised – they do provide a thin layer of protection. One man expressed a widely held view: “I don't know of anything good that has been done by peacekeeping forces.”¹²⁴ But he later said, “We need UNAMID because they are the only ones who can help people to return back to their places of origin by collecting all the weapons that people have.”¹²⁵ As another man said, “[UNAMID] are not active because they are not free. They are unable to move or to act alone, obviously they are controlled by government of NCP. So their objectives are good, but they are unable to move and unable to implement their objectives. But despite all that, their existence is important. It would be even worse without them.”¹²⁶

“UNAMID are here, and yet it is clear there is no stability because many of the IDPs who were recently returned have now been displaced for a second time.”

Indeed, there was a strong sense that the government wants to try and force UNAMID to leave so that this last layer of protection of civilians is removed: “The government wants to get UNAMID out so that it can conduct its worst activities – worse than ever before: ethnic cleansing, genocide and displacement will happen after the evacuation of UNAMID.”¹²⁷ Inevitably, therefore, there was a sense, not only of frustration that UNAMID was not doing more, but of desperation that the little protection they are providing could also be lost: “No one on the earth cares if we survive except God and sometimes UNAMID.”¹²⁸

Instead, people insisted that UNAMID should only withdraw once people have returned to their homes, identifying this as a clear indicator that there is sufficient security: “In my opinion, the peace keeping forces should only leave after the war is over in Darfur and the condition of IDPs and refugees is improved. Only when we have all gone home.”¹²⁹ In the meantime, their ongoing displacement – and the fact that new displacement continues to take place

Spokesperson for the Secretary-General,” 17 May 2016, available at

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/updatesea.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016)

¹²³ Interview with IDP man, Zalingei, Khamsa Dagaig IDP camp, Central Darfur, 20 April 2016.

¹²⁴ Interview with IDP man, Al Salaam, IDP camp, Nyala, South Darfur, 14 April 2016.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Interview with IDP man, Hasahisa IDP camp, Central Darfur, 7 April 2016.

¹²⁷ Interview with IDP woman, Mordassa, Dorti IDP camp, West Darfur, 18 April 2016.

¹²⁸ Interview with IDP man, Zalinga Khamsa Dagaig IDP camp, Central Darfur, 20 April 2016.

¹²⁹ Interview with Darfuri man, Shearia area, 8 April 2016.

– is evidence that the war is not over: “UNAMID are here, and yet it is clear there is no stability because many of the IDPs who were recently returned have now been displaced for a second time – in fact, even more than ever before, because of the volatile security situation.”¹³⁰ As a man living in Kassab camp in North Darfur said, “There is not any return to our homelands because they are taken by the militias and the *Janjaweed* who impose levees on those who go back – even those who go back just to farm.”¹³¹

Conclusion

After 13 years of conflict, the people of Darfur are painfully aware of the limitations of the international community in responding to their situation. They have lived with this war for years, and are not expecting miracles. The findings show that they recognise the challenges faced by UNAMID – challenges that, to a certain extent, reflect the broader factors that continue to drive the conflict. What they express as their primary desires echo those expressed to IRRI by displaced persons living in refugee camps in Chad in 2005: they want security and they want to be able to go home. Yet even their modest expectations, ground down by year after year of disappointment and failure by the international community to close the gap between international humanitarian and human rights law and its enforcement, are not being met. The fact that 11 years later these basic needs remain unaddressed is evidence of the failure not only of UNAMID, but of the international community as a whole. Their intense frustration, echoed by other Sudanese living in Khartoum,¹³² Southern Kordofan,¹³³ Blue Nile¹³⁴ and no doubt many other sites in Sudan, needs to be heard.

Yet despite this collective and shameful failure, the people of Darfur continue to look to the UN and other international actors for help. Collectively, we owe it to them to do better.

¹³⁰ Interview with IDP woman, Belil IDP camp, South Darfur, 10 April 2016.

¹³¹ Interview with IDP man, Kassab camp, North Darfur, 13 April 2016.

¹³² IRRI, “‘If the government denies the claims of the people it might lead to the disappearance of Sudan.’ Life in Khartoum for citizens without rights,” Citizenship and Displacement in the Great Lakes region, Working Paper 9, April 2013. Available at <http://www.refugee-rights.org/htdocs/Assets/PDFs/2013/Marginalised%20in%20Khartoum%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016).

¹³³ IRRI and National Human Rights Monitoring Organisation, “‘We just want a rest from war’: Civilian perspectives on the conflict in Sudan’s Southern Kordofan State.” June 2015. Available at <http://www.refugee-rights.org/Publications/Papers/2015/TiredofWar.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016.)

¹³⁴ IRRI research on conflict dynamics in Blue Nile, forthcoming.