

## The History of the Darfur Conflict and Its Recent Developments<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

The present article describes the situation unfolding in Darfur, West Sudan, where a conflict has been taking place since 2003. The author tries to examine all aspects of the crisis and the history of the problem. Beginning with the geography and the historical introduction of the issue, the text continues with the enumeration of the events that have unfolded in the region, beginning with 2003 up until the 2010s. Then the author reflects on the international peacekeeping mission established in the area (UNAMID), which was active between 2007-2020. The article goes on to describe the role of the Hungarian peacekeeping in the operation, and it concludes with the listing of the tasks that the peacekeepers had to accomplish on a short notice. After that, it explains the subsequent events that happened after the end of the 2000s. Detailing the most important factors which contributed to the ill-fated decade, it takes into consideration the features of the conflict that has formed in the 2010s. At the end, the author writes about the latest events that happened in the region including a failed coup attempt on the actual leadership of the country. Finally, he concludes the events end expresses his views about future expectations.

### Keywords:

Darfur conflict, inter-communal tensions, ethnic conflict, UNAMID, Janjaweed, SLA/SLM, JEM, Omar al-Bashir.

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<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59569/jceeas.2021.1.4.25>

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### *Short history and geography of Darfur*

For a brief etymology, it can be stated that the term 'Darfur' comes from the Arabic expression Dar and the ethnological name Fur. In Arabic, Dar means house or land, while Fur refers to the tribe of an ethnically diverse group, consisting mainly of Black people living in the region, who dominated the area. So literally it means the 'Land of the Fur' (de Waal, 2005, p. 181). The distribution of ethnicities is somewhat hard to delineate, although it can be said that the northern area of Darfur is inhabited mostly by Arabic population, while the southern part of the land is the home of the Fur and Zaghawa tribes (Totten and Markusen, 2013, p. 252).

Darfur has a unique geography: it is composed mainly of plains that are about 440,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and at its heart there are the Marrah Mountains which have the average height of 2,200 metres. The land is mostly arid and desert area, except for the highlands where the rain is more abundant than elsewhere. There is a difference in lifestyle between the two regions: in the northern areas people are engaged in camel and sheep herding, while the southern part consists of sedentary people, who grow crops and other types of vegetables (Besenyő, 2013. pp. 16-19.).

The Darfur region has its own history which stretches back to ancient times. From 1600 to 1916 it was a part of the Keira sultanate, which islamised the region and organized the administrative, political and cultural entity of the area. Beyond Islam, the Arabic language was important as it was the lingua franca of the sub-Saharan territory. It also provided the Darfurians with education, as the religion had its teachers to educate the minds of the local population. The three most important tribes were the Zaghawa, the Fur and the Masalit communities. Soon afterwards, the Ottoman influence came but after a short period of Turkish rule (1821-84) an interesting movement arose (de Waal, 2005, pp. 184-187). The so-called mahdiyya represented a religious system in which the Mahdi was the role model for his followers, and they were defeated only in 1898 (Daly and Daly, 2010, pp. 62-83).

The country gained independence in 1956. Until then, there were no major problems between the Arabic nomad and the Black sedentary communities. However, in the 1980s, several types of conflicts arose, and tensions erupted. The Black people, the Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa tribes of the Darfur area started to feel that they have been neglected by the Sudanese government. Because of the activity of the Popular Defence Forces – who ravished the Black population of the area at the time – there were serious issues at hand for the Darfurians to solve (de Waal, 2005 Jan., pp. 127-128).

The other cause of the conflict was the entrance of President Omar el-Bashir to the political scene, who organized a coup as a high ranking military officer in 1989. With the help of his advisor, Hasan al-Turabi – who was a well-known conservative Sudanese Islamist at the time – he started to islamise the people of Sudan and began to implement Islamic law (the sharia) (Childress, 2012, p. 141).



### *The beginning of the conflict*

After a long-standing conflict between the Darfurians and the government forces – composed mainly of soldiers of Arabic descent – a tense situation developed. Back from the colonial times, the Black people of the Darfur region felt that they are neglected, and the Sudanese Arabic policy is dominant over them. The fact that they were both Muslim didn't bother any of the sides, so the conflict was not a religious issue. However, it is too simplifying to differentiate between the Darfur region and Khartoum as to call the conflict region only Black. Arabs lived there as well, who were looked down on by the Khartoum leadership and were even called 'zurug', meaning 'Blacks' and 'abid', meaning 'slave' in Arabic regardless of their ethnical similarity (de Waal, 2005, p. 199.). There was another issue at hand which caused differences between the tribes. The so called 'hakurat' which refers to the ownership of lands was one of the most important sources of tension between the opposing sides (Copnall, 2013).

It is a complex setting in which the disagreement between the two sides is very uptight. From the late 20th century onwards, the conflict has escalated into a bloody massacre. By 2003, the Black minority of the area couldn't take the suppressing resolutions of the government and of al-Bashir anymore. The Zaghawa, Fur and Masalit tribes of the region started a revolt against the Khartoum government, and they attacked el-Fasher, the capital of Darfur (Besenyő, 2021, pp. 39-41). In response to the uprising, the Sudanese government created a special force comprised of Arabic tribes to encounter the dangers that were posed by the Darfurian rebels. This army was called the Janjaweed. They were a unit of Arabic soldiers (surprisingly some of them were of Darfurian Arabic descent) riding on horsebacks and fighting against the Darfurian community. They were in close alliance with the government of Sudan and al-Bashir and their task was to carry out the Arabization of the province and the oppression of the Darfurian Black and Arabic minority, the Zaghawa, the Fur and the Masalait tribes, who were fighting for their freedom in alliance with the Sudanese government (Leclair and Pahlavi, 2012, pp. 389-393).

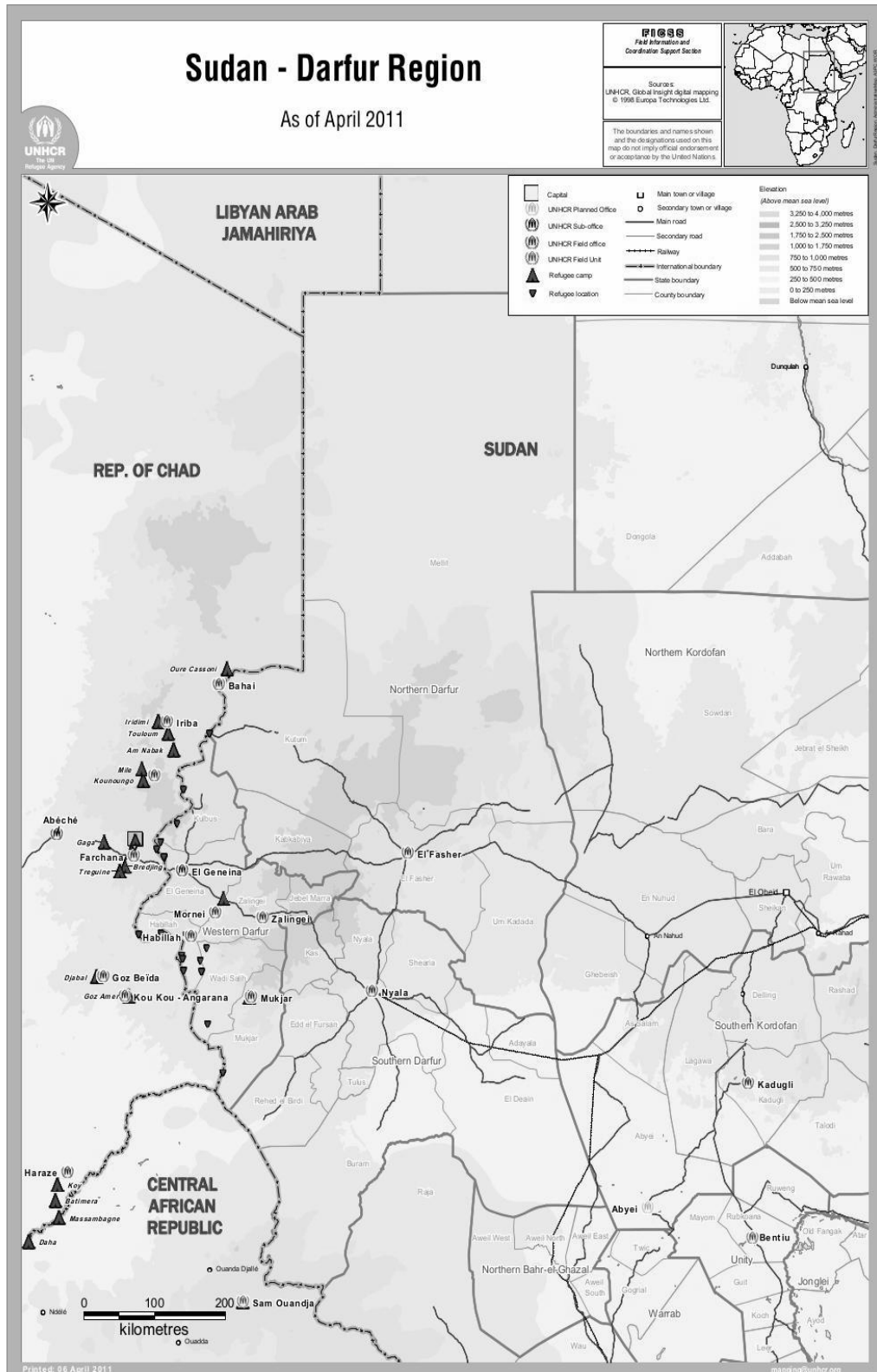


Figure 1. Sudan-Darfur. (Source: UNHCR, April 2011).



The rebel groups were primarily Black in their ethnicity, and they formed two movements which executed the revolt against the oppressing Sudanese government. These were called the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The Janjaweed didn't waste any time and started to harass the Black population of the Darfur region. They pillaged their villages, looted their belongings, raped their women, murdered civilians, and assaulted the elderly and the weak in their communities, while during the conflict, millions of Darfurians were displaced (2.5 million people to be exact), among whom 200,000 emigrated to Chad where they found refuge. The Janjaweed committed horrific crimes against humanity as they continuously harass the innocent civilians of the ill-fated region and they always got away with it because the Sudanese government was granting them impunity, so they are not held accountable for their misdeeds (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Not only has the number of refugees reached horrific numbers, but the number of deaths as terrible as well: at least 300,000 persons were killed in the campaign against the minorities.

### *The events of the conflict*

There were efforts to settle the problems in Darfur through peace accords which usually proven to be futile. In 2006, the sides made a peace agreement which was however ignored. Then in 2011, some of the rebels contributed to the creation of another attempt to achieve peace in the region, the so-called Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). Again, this was not so effective as the abuse of the weaker Darfurians continues until today and the international community is helpless in finding a solution to this conflict-ridden part of the world (Copnall, 2013).

The conflict looks hopeless because the government and the Janjaweed forces won't stop bothering humanitarian workers. They unceasingly attack aid convoys that try to carry with them the necessary humanitarian relief, providing food and shelter to the otherwise poor and helpless Darfurian civilians in need of international support. (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Another problem is caused by the fact that the Darfurian militias continue to harass international journalists, they hijack aid workers, and they strictly control the media and the news of the country, thus there is no freedom of speech in the area. In 2006 for example, Western journalists were held hostage by Sudanese government forces for a long period (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

The international community had to react to the events sooner or later, because the genocide dragged on. Soon after the initial horrendous acts and the terrorizing deeds of the Janjaweed militia, the United Nations Security Council (referring to the Rome Statute) entrusted the International Criminal Court (ICC) to proceed in the matter of the Darfur conflict and the organization accordingly started to indict several Sudanese governmental officials on the basis of committing war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity in 2005 (ICC-

02/05, 2021). In 2009 and then in 2010, the president Omar al-Bashir was also indicted with genocide and war crimes committed against the Black minority of Darfur during the past years of the conflict. According to the indictment, the genocide was carried out by Bashir against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa communities of the Darfur region. At first, he was accused of war crimes, but in 2010, the ICC stated that Bashir committed three cases of genocide as well (Childress, 2012, p. 144). It is interesting to observe the words of Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the ICC prosecutor who wrote in an article in *The Guardian* that Bashir committed several cases of war crimes and genocide against the Black minority of the country in the Darfur region, and he suggested that Bashir committed these horrendous acts through his right hand, Ahmed Harun (Minister of Interior). Ocampo thinks that Bashir's crimes also expand to the situation of the displaced refugees, who are in a dreadful situation, suffering from the lack of proper living conditions. To quote his words: „No more excuses. ... Bashir's forces continue to use different weapons to commit genocide: bullets, rape and hunger.” (Moreno-Ocampo, 15 July 2010).

Observing the reactions of the world, it is interesting to note that the Obama-administration wasn't very keen to react to the genocidal acts that were going on at the time in the suffering region. United States president Barack Obama gave a speech in January 2011 about Sudan, but he was mainly talking about its government and the South Sudan issue and omitted the question of the Darfurian crisis. However, according to Reuters, U.S. correspondents don't think that this means a negative view of the situation in Darfur by the country (Charbonneau, 2011).

Thus, it can be suggested that the situation in Darfur, Sudan is hardly but frustrating. The Black minority continues to be abused and offended by the Janjaweed militia, which has no remorse but to pillage and loot the areas of the Darfurians while raping their women and taking their belongings. The Khartoum government provides them with support, and it doesn't intend to stop aiding these militias who make the life of the Darfurians a nightmare. The humanitarian situation in the area is horrific, millions of people have fled to refugee camps and to the West in Chad where they live under bad circumstances. The international community started to take notice of the genocide taking place in Darfur, therefore they began to make assessments to hold the perpetrators accountable. The ICC indicted several officials in the Bashir-government who they think personally contributed to the genocidal acts of the Janjaweed militia and the government forces. In 2010, the situation was dire because – despite the serious efforts of the international community to broker a peace deal with the opposing parties – the conflict escalated, and the attacks became more and more frequent. The aggressive acts continued and the international community had to react to this not only by the means of international law, but also by force. This led to the creation of the international peacekeeping force, UNAMID (United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur). UNAMID was a hybrid operation as it was comprised of African forces well. In the following paragraphs, the role and the nature of the mission will be clarified.

### *The UNAMID and its duties*

Before analysing UNAMID, it is interesting to take a look at the AMIS operations that started before the UN mission and were initiated by the African Union in order to ease the situation unfolding in Darfur. Hungarian peacekeepers also served in the mission. In July 2005, AMIS-II was initiated in which EU observers and logistics advisers got a place too. On this occasion had the Hungarian government the opportunity to send peacekeepers to the mission among whom then Major (now ret. Colonel) János Besenyő served as a logistics officer. He was one of the peacekeepers who continuously wrote about the topic, and he described his experiences in several articles about the Darfur conflict and the work of the peacekeepers, which is an important source for the scholars who want to research the topic (Besenyő, 2006, pp.41-42). Besenyő had interesting experiences in the camps he served in. His job title was Field Support Service deputy commander, and he mainly carried out logistic duties. Here is a small entry from his unpublished diary to describe the liveliness and the weariness of the situation that awaited the Hungarian peacekeeping officer: "... During the week, in the second sector (Nyala), one of our patrols was attacked. One Nigerian soldier got shot in the leg. ... Overall, the activities of the armed rebel groups seem to intensify...Moreover, the Janjaweed groups and sometimes also the government's military and police departments carry out attacks against the residents of the refugee camps, raping girls and women who are heading to get water..." (Besenyő, 2021, pp.155-156)

The UNAMID was a consequence of the events that have been unfolding in the course of the 2000s. As it was discussed above, from 2003 on, a tragic genocide has been taking place which affected not only the country's stability but also that of neighbouring Chad. From the beginning of the 2010s, nearly 500,000 people had taken refuge from the campaign of the Janjaweed, most of them emigrating into neighbouring Chad (Herr, 2020, p. 79). But let's not hasten that much forward, as it is first interesting to take a look at the mission that was orchestrated in order to regulate and form a normal environment for the displaced and suffering people of the Sudanese population in Darfur.

UNAMID was created according to UN resolution 1769 in which the hybrid force was established on 31 July 2007 to augment the then existing African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). The African Union joined forces with the United Nations-deployed mission by which the international community wished to ensure the equality and normal livelihood of the Darfurian Black minorities. UNAMID was implemented on 31 December 2007. The main tasks of the operation were the following:

- To help the humanitarian work of the already existing health aid organizations and other NGOs;
- Use the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) as a basis for talks and negotiations between the opposing parties;
- Try to solve the roots of the conflict, the tribal and ethnical differences highlighted.

There are numerous aspects of the conflict in which the UNAMID peacekeeping force is taking part. It has several camps or centers from where it functions. The main headquarters is in El-Fasher in North Darfur, while there are several other sectoral headquarters, for example El-Geneia in West Darfur, Nyala in South Darfur, Zalingei in central Darfur and El Daein in East Darfur. The staff of the mission is abundant compared to other UN operations. In the beginning, it was comprised of 25,987 men, of which there were 19,555 soldiers, 360 military observers, 3,772 police advisers and 2,660 formed police units (FPU). After a while, however, the UN decided to decrease the number of troops serving in the mission, and by July 2012, the total number of soldiers serving in the mission was 23,743 persons. The mission is in a difficult situation, as the Sudanese government is not always willing to assist to the work of the peacekeepers. While the ruling class of the country is inimical to the leaders of the mission as they don't welcome very much the UNAMID force in their country. There are other issues as well, as the climate and the area of the mission is situated in a very harsh zone, where the soil is rigid and there are not a lot of resources at hand to live a comfortable life in the mission due to the poor conditions. The equipment is also insufficient, often vehicles or other means of transport are missing, the infrastructure of the country is unorganized, and it is hard to transport supply items from one place to another. The aerial support is weak as well, sometimes it is hard to overcome transportation and infrastructure problems to reach the proper number of aeroplanes and helicopters in the mission. However, the operation tries its best to encounter the harsh measures which they face in the conflict-ridden area. They have to meet the standards set by the mandate of the mission described above. They have to support civilian life, help the aid workers and try to convince the parties to sit down to a common negotiating table where they could discuss the ongoing problems and try to find a solution that could benefit both parties. UNAMID also appointed a joint AU-UN Chief Mediator for Darfur, who is changed regularly, and his role was to enable the discussion between the opposing sides and to develop a proper environment for talks to be held between the Sudanese government and several opposing movements (UNAMID homepage, 2021).

A few times there were complaints about the nature and success of the operation, as some mediums criticized the effectiveness of the mission. UNAMID was at times questioned, its mandate was taken into consideration from time to time and it was continuously checked based on its efficiency. For example, there were some questions raised about the troops of the mission. According to some sources, the operation was terribly understaffed, and thus it was unable to conduct sufficient peacekeeping work in the area where UNAMID faces several climatic, political, and other kinds of difficulties. It was also criticized that the mission didn't have enough equipment or supply to complement the existing resources of the peacekeeping operation (Brosché and Rothbart, 2013, pp. 117-122). Other sources complained about the inefficiency of the political-diplomatic machinery of the mission. According some researcher, the mission's leadership was so far too weak with the Sudanese government and they miss the proper strength to encounter the heads of the state to achieve at least a mediocre result in implementing the provisions of the peace agreements and acquiring the rights of the civilian population (Brosché and Rothbart, 2013, p. 121; Besenyő, 2021, p. 99).





### *The recent developments of the conflict*

Turning back to the conflict, one can observe the changing of the situation. Before 2010, the attacks have diminished, and the security was becoming somewhat stable, however, in the course of 2011 there have been repeated attempts of killings and the conflict escalated more. This can be contributed to the fact that the parties didn't take seriously the DDPD (Charbonneau, 2011). The hostilities therefore emerged again, and the international peacekeeping forces were unable to handle the situation properly regardless of their huge number in comparison to other United Nations missions. The intentional genocide, killings, rape murder and abuse of the civilians continued well into the 2010s and they didn't stop despite the efforts of the politicians and the soldiers on the ground. The Black minority continued to be harassed by government troops and other forces (i.e., militias), which were ruthless and committed serious crimes against humanity.

To describe the situation in the early 2010s it is useful to take a look at the report of the United Nations in 2014. According to the document, UNAMID observed that the rights of the civilians are further assaulted by the state forces called the Sudan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the militia Rapid Support Forces (RSF). There are several other organizations of the government who took part in the genocidal acts including Sudanese police organizations and border patrol. There were also inter-communal clashes among the tribes of the Darfur area, thus the conflict seems to be complicated. According to the document there were several cases when civilians were deprived of their rights, and they were injured during the attack of the government forces and militias. Two examples can illustrate the harsh environment in which they continue to exist. On 31 May 2014, there was an incident between a SAF soldier and a local Sheikh. He was allegedly murdered by the military forces of the government. What is usual regarding the document is that the SAF didn't take responsibility for its actions, in fact, it didn't even investigate the killing of an innocent civilian in the Western area of Darfur. The other example involves two young boys in Nyala, who were peacefully returning home but were attacked by RSF forces who caused serious injuries to them and one of them died in the perpetrated attack. It is a typical feature of these acts, that when UNAMID investigated the case, it was discovered that the boy didn't even report the situation. Consequently – and typically one might add – the Sudanese forces withstood further investigation into the case and it was covered up by the government's armed forces and police. There were other types of abuses as well. One regular type of war crimes was the repeated sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against civilians. According to the report, most of the sexual attacks happened in the Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. The main problem is that the Darfurian society looks down on the victims of these terrible assaults and they become differentiated by the local townsfolk. Two example here can show the seriousness of the problem in the area. For example, on 22 August 2014 in South Darfur 15 women, some of them still underage were assaulted and they were mishandled by soldiers. It is typical of the Sudanese justice system that no further action was taken, and the impunity of the perpetrators remains a real problem in the territory. In July 2014, two minors were raped by the government forces as they were

travelling by car, and their companions were attacked as well – their property was stolen. There were also inimical attacks on villages by the government forces. One example is the usual feature of the 'Operation Decisive Summer' that was initiated by the government and carried out by SAF and RSF forces: on 19 May 2014 the Khartoum regime conducted a serious offensive against the rebels of Darfur in which three persons were murdered and there could have been other casualties as well. The market was demolished, and the area was looted. The new effort from the government to oppress the Darfurian civilians has taken another level and the innocent people and displaced are at risk because of the continuous abuse of the Khartoum regime. Not only civilians, but UNAMID personnel can't sleep at night anymore. On 30 August in El Geneia in West Darfur a peacekeeper and a Sudanese soldier got into a fight, and consequently the government forces shot dead the UNAMID soldier. Interestingly, the Sudanese authorities didn't even react to these events and the death of the soldier remains covered up by the Bashir-leadership. These acts show that the life of the civilians and the rebels including the peacekeepers is in danger and they need serious assistance in order to evade such assaults on their life and their property (Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014).

Moving forward in time, other atrocities were recorded as well allegedly committed by the government forces against the civilian population in Darfur. According to some sources, the Khartoum regime applied chemical weapons on innocent Darfurians in the course of January 2016. The weapons caused dire aches for the individuals: it inflicted strong pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and blindness on the persons who were exposed to such chemicals (McDougall, 2021, p. 255).

At the end of the 2010s another remarkable event happened. As of 19 December 2019, a popular revolt began in Sudan as the government significantly raised the price of bread. Amidst growing discontent because of the inefficiency of the Khartoum regime and the reign of Omar al-Bashir, who terrorized the Black minorities of the country, inflicted harm upon its citizens and managed to ruin the economy of the country, the Sudanese people started to voice their concerns regarding the head of the state and his rule. In consequence of the protests, on 8 April 2019 several people went to one of the important military installations of the Sudanese government, in which the presidential suite can be found. The demonstrators called for the resignation of el-Bashir, who – as mentioned above – was indicted by the ICC for committing horrendous crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. However, until that point, he remained in office which ought to have been changed by the course of a week. Interestingly it seems that there were clashes between the Sudanese security forces and inside the military, thus it could be observed that Bashir has lost control over his military machinery and suggested his demise soon (Burke, 8 April 2019).

This was to happen anyway, as the military intervened, and by a coup, they arrested Omar al-Bashir and detained him in a Sudanese prison. The armed forces announced that they would be in power for two years, and after they have consolidated the country's situation, they would give the opportunity to the people of Sudan to decide on the future of the state. The



correspondent of the Sudanese forces declared that state emergency would continue, and a curfew would be implemented. The Sudanese people were impressed with the arrest of el-Bashir, but they expressed their grave fears that the following military government would continue to pursue harsh politics and the situation of the Darfurians, and the Sudanese would not improve very much. Therefore, violent protest broke out in several villages in the rural areas and in Khartoum at the same time in order to demonstrate against an oppressive regime that could have followed the Bashir-era. An interesting fact can be that these massive uprisings against the old government followed only by a week the demise of the 20-year long rule of the Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Burke, 11 April 2019).

Along these political events another case was beginning to settle. The more or less successful UNAMID hybrid operation in Darfur was ordered to dissolve itself in July 2018. The decision came despite several clashes between ethnic groups and the usual enemies in the region, and it can be attributed to the inertia of the peacekeeping forces to ensure a peaceful way of life for the oppressed Black minorities. Despite the big size of their contingent, they were not always able to control the situation, thus the leadership decided to end the mission on 30 June 2020. Meanwhile, the political unrest has unfolded, and after the arrest of el-Bashir the organization chose to implement a transition process during its withdrawal from the scene. They developed a draft named Joint Transition Action Plan in which they designated three themes important for transition: land rights, intercommunal conflicts and the situation of IDP persons and refugees. This plan comprised of areas that should be important in a transition for UNAMID, therefore state liaison functions (SLF) were named:

- The rule of law
- Human rights
- The development of the situation of the displaced people and refugees
- The accommodation of the above-mentioned populace and their supply

These areas got a 99-men strong UNAMID support, which was responsible for the peaceful implementation of the concerns highlighted in the draft. Their main plan was not to involve the peacekeeping mission in the transition of the socio-political situation in Sudan, thus they could have ensured the right of the Darfurians to develop an independent system that would have been appropriate for them. Notwithstanding the transitional plans, there have been violent assaults in the area, 34 deaths and 180 injured were reported in the course of April-May 2019. An important fact was that on 17 August 2019 the government forces and the rebels reached a common understanding and agreement on the peaceful transition of the government and the relocation of the forces important for both sides. Thus, a democratic process was initiated and started to have effect on the country's livelihood. However, peace didn't last long in the country. The UNAMID's mandate was prolonged due to the events as of 31 October 2020 (Center of International Cooperation, 2019, pp. 15-17). Finally, after several years of faithful service and devoted work in the interest of the Darfur region, the huge-numbered operation ended on 31 December 2020 (United Nations Peacekeeping. UNAMID, 2021). The work of the mission was sometimes successful but there have been several

problems that remain to be solved and the peacekeeping activities of the area should not stop in order to develop a better country and to help the struggling Darfurian civilians to achieve their goals and the IDPs to return to their homeland.

As UNAMID was pulling out of Sudan, the situation remained dire. The main problem was that the military government, which ousted ex-president al-Bashir is comprised of former generals who served in the Bashir-regime, and they are complicit in the illegal activities of the former leadership. The civilians thus fear that the transitional government that was created would not take into consideration their rights and simply ignore the fact that they are in need of serious assistance in order to implement peace not only in the Darfur region but in entire Sudan as well. The transitional process however reached a milestone, as a peace deal was struck in October 2020 in Juba (South Sudan) between the government and the rebel forces. However, this deal has several difficulties, as for example the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul-Wahid (SLA-AW) is not willing to participate in the peace process. Thus, the peace agreement remains incomplete with fractions left out of the picture. Another problem is posed by the refugees and expelled rebels returning home (Kleinfield and Amin, 6 April 2021).

Concerning the UNAMID operation, there are sources that are in favour of the mission, and conclude that the it has served well in the previous years to establish confidence between the Khartoum regime and the rebels living in Darfur province. According to these sources, the genocide was at least halted, and the civilians can feel a little bit safer now as the mission has partly completed its task in delivering peace to the area. However, they were unable to stop the violent rifts between the various fractions of the tribes in the area and they are still fighting for land rights among each other. The government accordingly has a duty to uphold: it shouldn't 't go hard on the population of the Darfur region, and during the disarmament process it should rather entrust the local Sheiks and other leaders to ensure the safe transition of the populace and the proper implementation of the peace deal. If the government uses excessive force during the process, many of the tribal violence will be unavoidable. Another factor will be the ethnic background of the tribes: what will be the connection between African and Arab tribes, who will the government favour? These are questions of the future to be answered (Essawi, 8 Januar 2021).

### *The unfolding events of the 2020s*

Since the peace deal, however, violence has emerged again. In June 2021, Arabs and the African minority have started to fight among each other, so the aggression continues. According to local sources, circa 36 people have died during the attacks. The source of the conflict was the ownership of land rights, which have already caused a lot of trouble for the Darfurian community and the innocent civilians exposed to the deadly issues concerning the region (Africanews, 07 July 2021).



However, that was not the end of violence in the region. This time it was not mainly Darfur, but instead the whole country became the center of international attention, and of course, this will have effect on the Darfur conflict as well. On 21 September 2021, a military coup attempt was carried out in the cities of Omdurman and Khartoum. Sources say that the plotters were pro-Bashir militants or soldiers who attempted to overthrow the fragile civilian-military government that was based on the October 2020 peace treaty. According to Sudanese officials, 21 officers were held accountable and there was an attempt to find those remaining at large. In reaction, the military deployed its forces on the bridges between Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri. The coup was organized by the military – according to officials – and it targeted government facilities as well, without any success (Human Rights Watch, 2022, p. 625). Other news agencies reported that in the rural areas as well as in Khartoum there were several demonstrations against the military coup, for example in Port Sudan, and there were signs of students protesting against the possible takeover of the pro-Bashir military generals (Africanews, 21 September 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The situation in Darfur is dire. Despite several peace attempts, negotiations and UN peacekeeping forces, the ethno-political division between the central area and the Western Darfur lands has increased. The inter-communal clashes remained frequent, only the end of the 2010s brought about some relaxation. The peace deals struck in 2006, 2011 and 2019 were not implemented well enough to ensure the safety of the locals. The Darfur conflict escalates more and more. Although the UNAMID international hybrid peacekeeping mission helped to ease tensions between the government forces, the rebels and the civilians, there is still an inter-communal rift between the two sides which remains to be solved either by the country or by another international force. The displaced Darfurians are still living in refugee camps and despite the provisions of the peace accords that they can return to their homeland, it is still impossible to repatriate them, since the situation in the area is not appropriate for the return. In the future it will be the job of the international community and the government to try to implement the peace deals and their provisions better and to give hope for the Darfurians to fight for their cause and achieve some recognition not only in their country but globally as well.

### **Conflict of interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### Notes on contributor

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