

Situation Update: Humanitarian response for areas affected by recent clashes in Darfur

Summary

Gaining access to civilians affected by fighting in Darfur is the main objective for humanitarian organizations. While some assistance has already been given in some places, many people are still out of reach until a cessation of hostilities takes place. Continued fighting is resulting in successive waves of displacement for many in affected areas.

NGOs and UN agencies have adequate supplies to meet immediate needs of people likely to be affected by these developments. Two to three days of access would be necessary to conduct rapid assessments and deliver required relief assistance to cover most urgent needs.

Concerted efforts are currently being undertaken by humanitarian actors in Sudan with national and state authorities to enable the soonest possible access to areas affected by fighting.

Background

Since January 2010, armed clashes occurred in all three Darfur states between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and rebel movements, as well as among rival factions within rebel groups.

In January, fighting between factions of the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) took place around Nertiti locality in western Jebel Marra, a mountainous area in the east of Western Darfur state. On 26 January, fighting reportedly resumed between opposing SLA-AW factions but stopped by the second week of February. Security conditions in the area remained uncertain. Clashes caused displacements to a number of villages and IDP settlements in western Jebel Marra (mainly Nertiti, Guldo and Thur), prompting urgent humanitarian assessments and response.

In eastern Jebel Marra, which reaches into both Southern and Northern Darfur, SAF attacks on SLA-AW positions in Kidingeer, Leiba and Fugoli, Southern Darfur, were reported throughout February affecting Feina and Deribat in South Darfur, as well as Aradeep, Katur and Fanga in North Darfur. The impact of these events on civilian populations is still to be ascertained, as the area remains inaccessible to humanitarian organizations due to insecurity. All humanitarian operations have been suspended in the area since mid-February, and NGO compounds and humanitarian supplies in Feina and Deribat have reportedly been looted during attacks.

Since early January, renewed fighting between SAF and forces of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM, recent ceasefire signatory) has been reported in the Northern Corridor of Western



Darfur, including aerial attacks by the Government, which escalated fighting in JEM-controlled locations around Jebel Moon. Aerial attacks in Jebel Moon and Kishkish areas in late January and early February, affected primarily the areas between Selea and Kulbus. With insecurity preventing any road or air access into the area, the full extent of humanitarian needs is yet to be assessed.

Humanitarian response and preparedness

In areas where assessments have been possible, delivery of relief aid has focused on emergency shelter and health. However, humanitarian presence has been seriously limited by poor security conditions, and verification of numbers of affected people has not yet been possible. Main concerns remain for people in areas where there is no access.

Western Jebel Marra (West Darfur)

The majority of people displaced as a result of the fighting fled to the areas of Nertiti, Guldo and Thur. Security in the area is reportedly calm but still unpredictable.

Nertiti: A UN-NGO assessment carried out on 16–22 February estimated about 2,000 newly arrived households. UNHCR and NGO partners completed distribution of shelter materials after the assessment, while the Government Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has also started food aid distribution for approximately for 5,850 households.

Guldo: All new arrivals are being hosted by local communities. Community leaders gave an estimate of 3,000 new arrivals. Food shortages are of concern in the area due to the combination of poor harvest and lack of access to markets.

Thur: HAC will deliver sorghum based on its own estimate of 1,760 recently arrived IDP households.

Eastern Jebel Marra (South and North Darfur)

Main areas affected by ongoing insecurity in South Darfur are Leiba, Fuguli, Kara, Kidingeer, Feina and Deribat. The four international NGOs operating in parts of Eastern Jebel Marra in South Darfur have relocated all international staff due to insecurity. There are no health services available at present in the area, which has an estimated total population of 100,000 people. Suspension of humanitarian operations has created important gaps in water and sanitation services and livelihood/agricultural assistance.

UN agencies and NGOs have reinforced preparedness, but until access can be guaranteed, assessment of needs and delivery of assistance remain on hold.

In North Darfur, fighting between SLA-AW and SAF has reportedly affected the areas of Fanga Suk and Gosdor, near the border of West Darfur. In Fanga (with an estimated population of 30,000), fighting has historically caused temporary displacement to the mountains, and agencies working in the area anticipate a similar development as a result of current events. Poor road access and ongoing military activity have prevented assessment of the area. One international NGO ran two health clinics in Fanga; one closed last week and the other was looted during recent attacks.

According to local sources, the majority of the population of Gosdor, (15 km east of Fanga, with a total population of about 12,000) has likely moved to

the hills. Food needs in these areas are a primary concern, especially after the recent poor harvest season.

West Darfur – Jebel Moon/Northern Corridor

Reliable information about the effect of fighting on civilian populations is scarce as a result of lack of access to the area. The single road providing entry to the area has been assessed as too insecure and flights into the area (including to Selea, Kulbus, Sirba and Abu Suruj) have been interrupted as precautionary measure.

Unconfirmed reports from local sources indicate that some 4,000 people are displaced in Selea. Confirmation of overall affected population remains impossible until assessments can be conducted.

In anticipation of urgent needs, WHO and NGO partners have pre-positioned essential drugs and emergency health supplies for transfer to Kulbus hospital.

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