



Special Report

# International Failures Prolong Darfur's Misery

INSTITUTE FOR  
WAR & PEACE REPORTING



**INSTITUTE FOR  
WAR & PEACE REPORTING**

---



Special Report

# International Failures Prolong Darfur's Misery

Written by Tajeldin Abdalla Adam, Katy Glassborow, Simon Jennings and Assadig Mustafa Zakaria Musa

Edited by Blake Evans-Pritchard and John MacLeod

Produced by IWPR Netherlands' International Justice Programme in The Hague, in collaboration with  
Sudanese journalists from Radio Dabanga

November 2010 - April 2011

© **INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING** The Netherlands

Zeestraat 100  
2518 AD The Hague  
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)70 338 9016

**iwpr.net**

---

# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>About IWPR</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>Khartoum Under Fire Over IDP Camp Conditions</b>	<b>06</b>
Tajeldin Abdhalla Adam Katy Glassborow Simon Jennings Assadig Mustafa Zakaria Musa	
<b>UN Accused of Caving In to Khartoum Over Darfur</b>	<b>09</b>
Tajeldin Abdhalla Adam Katy Glassborow Simon Jennings Assadig Mustafa Zakaria Musa	
<b>Funding False Hopes in Darfur</b>	<b>15</b>
Katy Glassborow Simon Jennings	

**Cover photo © UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran**

A woman leaves her camp site to collect water in Khor Abeche, South Darfur. She is part of a community of almost 2,000 displaced Sudanese who have settled in the area, near a team site of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), after fleeing violence in their native Darfur villages last December. UNAMID is providing water and security to the displaced while urgent humanitarian relief arrives.

# Foreword

An IWPR investigation into the floundering aid effort in Darfur has revealed the unwillingness of the international community to stand up to interference and obstruction from the government of Sudan.

Thousands of people uprooted by war continue to be cut off from aid as United Nations agencies and the governments which fund them fail to effectively confront Khartoum on the issue.

Eight years after the conflict began, the joint UN/African Union peacekeeping mission is still denied access to key conflict zones, while UN aid agencies are prevented from assessing humanitarian needs and delivering supplies.

Meanwhile, the leaders of camps for displaced people across Darfur report shortages of food and medical supplies which have caused child malnutrition and mortality to soar. They say the government is failing in its duty to protect and provide for them, and is in fact doing the opposite.

The ICC says the government's treatment of displaced Darfuris amounts to further evidence of genocide by attrition.

Actors on the ground and experts outside Sudan say the thinly-veiled threats made by government agencies against aid workers and diplomats, compounded by the competing priorities of donor states, mean that international actors are failing to challenge Khartoum's continuing brutal treatment of displaced Darfuris. They say it is time for the countries that donate aid to Darfur to present a united front and insist that the Sudanese government fulfils its obligation to facilitate effective aid operations.

# About IWPR

---

Special Report - International Failures Prolong Darfur's Misery was produced by IWPR Netherlands' International Justice Programme in The Hague, in collaboration with Sudanese journalists from Radio Dabanga.

IWPR builds peace and democracy through free and fair media with major reporting, training and institution-building projects in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and a key cross-cutting thematic programme on international justice and accountability. Our programmes build the skills and institutional capacity of local media in crisis areas, while extensive media outputs demonstrate the capacity of local journalists to access unique information and make significant contributions to local and international understanding of a broad array of critical issues affecting their countries/regions.

For further information on the justice programme see [iwpr.net](http://iwpr.net) or call +31(0)70 338 9016.

# Khartoum Under Fire Over IDP Camp Conditions

ICC prosecutors say situation is further evidence of an ongoing genocide campaign in Darfur.

**Tajeldin Abdhalla**

**Katy Glassborow**

**Simon Jennings**

**Assadig Mustafa Zakaria Musa**

The Sudanese government is hampering international efforts to address chronic levels of malnutrition in camps for displaced people in Darfur, according to the country head of the United Nations children's agency UNICEF.

Nils Kastberg told *Fi al Mizan*, a programme about justice issues, co-produced by IWPR for Dutch-based broadcaster Radio Dabanga, that Khartoum was blocking access to camps as well as delaying the release of vital nutrition surveys required by agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme, WFP, to supply food aid to the region.

"We are extremely concerned," Kastberg said. "When we conduct surveys to help us address issues, in collaboration with the ministry of health, very often other parts of the government such as the humanitarian affairs commission interferes and delays in the release of reports, making it difficult for us to respond in a timely way."

Kastberg claimed that the country's security services also hinder or delay access to the camps.

The grim situation has prompted further warnings from the International Criminal Court, ICC, of a continued campaign of genocide against internally displaced people, IDPs, in Darfur. Since 2003, the war-torn region has seen more than 2.5 million people pushed into these camps.

"The government is using hunger, rape and fear to attack these IDPs in their camps in Darfur," Islam Shalabi, from the ICC's office of the prosecutor, OTP, said. "This is another tool of war used by the government of Sudan."

Prosecutors allege that Khartoum has conducted genocide by employing the national armed forces and allied Janjaweed militia to deliberately bring about the physical destruction of Darfur's Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups.

The ICC has issued arrest war crimes warrants for three members of the Sudanese regime, including President Omar al-Bashir, former humanitarian affairs minister Ahmed Haroun and allied Janjaweed militia leader Ali Abdul Rahman, commonly known as Ali Kushayb. Bashir has been charged with genocide.

Civil society leaders and aid workers in camps across Darfur say that food shortages and malnutrition have become worse since the government expelled foreign NGOs in early 2009, following the Bashir arrest warrant.

They say the government is undertaking a deliberate policy to clear the camps in Darfur. Methods included stopping agencies providing enough support, thereby putting pressure on IDPs to go back to their villages.

But observers warn that their lands are often now occupied by armed militias, putting IDPs at risk if they were to return.

"We think that the humanitarian affairs commission [is preventing the supply of] enough food because the government wants people to leave camps," one camp leader from Darfur said. "This is a government policy. This is death by another policy."

Hafiz Mohammed, of the London-based advocacy group Justice Africa, said he believed that the government was trying to exert control over access to the camps.

"IDP camps represent security threats for the government. That is why the government is not allowing full access to these camps, and the free movements of its residents," he said.

The Sudanese minister for humanitarian affairs, Mutrif Siddig, denied the allegations that the ministry was hampering UNICEF operations in the IDP camps.

He also denied that there was any government policy of inhibiting the work of international agencies providing aid to the camps and said that his ministry was “working in close collaboration” with UNICEF and Kastberg.

“The only problem was in Jebel Marra where we had fighting between the SLA (the rebel group the Sudanese Liberation Army) and our armed forces. This was the only time we had a problem [providing access to camps],” he said.

“For the rest of Darfur, it is clear for all the international missions to do their work. It was only for a limited time in Jebel Marra and it is now open for all organisations to operate freely.”

## Children Are Hard Hit

But those in the camps say that the extent of their suffering is clear - and that children, many of whom were born there, are some of the worst affected by the blocking of international assistance.

“Some kids couldn’t sit for exams because they were sick. Others cannot follow classes regularly because of malnutrition,” one camp leader said.

A Darfur health worker explained that there were no longer any qualified doctors at the clinic in his camp. Special wards set up by NGOs to treat malnourished children were closed down after the Sudanese government took charge of the provision of humanitarian assistance to the region in 2009.

“When the aid organisations were running it, we had very good services. But after they were expelled and their role taken over by Sudanese, the quality of the services deteriorated,” the health worker said, explaining how clean water and medication, which used to be common in the camp, were now in short supply.

“It is very difficult for children below five to survive this. They will probably die.”

One boy living in a camp said that some children don’t go to school because there is not enough food aid, and are forced to go out to work instead.

“There are kids who sometimes don’t show up in the class. This is because sometimes they cannot [find] food for themselves and for their families,” he said. “So they go out and search for food... earn money somehow. Kids sometimes go and work for farmers.”

For those who do attend school, malnutrition often affects their studies.

“Because of these difficult conditions, they are absent-minded in class,” a teacher in a camp school said. “[A child] is physically with you in the class, but his mind is somewhere else. [Children] have problems getting enough food at home. This is not helpful for them. For children to grow mentally, they need enough food supplies.”

According to the ICC’s Shalabi, the 13 aid organisations that were expelled in 2009 contributed approximately 40 per cent of the humanitarian assistance in Darfur and this has yet to be replaced.

In January this year, the government withdrew work permits for a further 26 NGOs. In July and August, five more aid workers were expelled.

“This practically means that the government intends to monopolise access to Darfur, and to control all the aid that the international community commits, [thereby controlling] the lives of the IDPs,” Shalabi said.

Sudan’s health minister, Abdullah Tia, admits there’s malnutrition in the IDP camps, but insists this is common amongst the Sudanese population at large. He acknowledges, however, that the government has been unable to adequately fill the gap left by NGOs after they were expelled.

“Unfortunately, despite all the talk about the ‘Sudanisation’ of the relief work, it has not been a success,” he said. “The only thing [the ministry of humanitarian affairs] did was review the work of some [international] organisations and try to coordinate with them, but the ministry of humanitarian affairs ultimately was not able to meet expectations.”

## ICC Investigation

Hague prosecutors continue to allege that the Sudanese government is intentionally violating its legal responsibility to provide shelter, health and food services to IDPs.

When charging Bashir in March last year, ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said that genocide was being masterminded in Darfur through rape, hunger and fear. Prosecutors now say that the current use of the humanitarian affairs office to monopolise and control the flow of aid into Darfur, and expose IDPs to starvation, is another tool of war used by the government against people in the region. In short, prosecutors say it is further evidence of genocide by attrition.

“Genocide needs to be carried out through careful planning, and systematic implementation. What happens in Darfur now is evidence... that there are no separated incidents and things [do not] occur arbitrarily [without a] fixed policy,” Shalabi said.

Since the expulsion of the NGOs, the government has granted aid groups and UN agencies only very limited access to the region, arguing that they could be collaborating with the court. Once inside Darfur, the movements of aid workers are strictly controlled by the government. This has made it extremely difficult for the international community to assess the security and humanitarian situation on the ground.

“The government of Sudan has created a vacuum of information on Darfur,” Shalabi said. “The only conclusion we can make is that the government of Sudan has something to hide regarding the humanitarian situation.”

One doctor in an IDP camp in Darfur confirmed that even the aid organisations that can still operate in Darfur have great difficulty getting into the camps.

“Since July, doctors who come from outside to work in the clinics inside the camp are only given two hours per day by the government [for their work],” he explained. “Sometimes they spend half of this time just getting there.”

Siddig rejected claims that the government was intentionally blocking aid to camps, claiming that any such blockade was due to rebel groups.

“We have been working closely to ensure all organisations are working freely in all the IDP camps in Darfur, including Kalma camp where we witnessed some problems for some time,” he said.

The Kalma camp was the scene of angry clashes in August over the participation of some IDPs in the Doha peace process with Khartoum.

The minister also said that his department had not manipulated information available to international actors such as WFP for the purposes of pushing IDPs out of the camps in Darfur.

“We are dealing directly with WFP,” Siddig said. “There are direct meetings between our ministry and all international actors and we do not have such a problem.”

Justice Africa’s Mohammed says that the government is obliged under international law to bring aid to the IDPs.

“These people are Sudanese civilians. Their security and well being is the sole responsibility of the state, no matter which kind of government runs the state,” he said. “If it doesn’t have the ability, [the state] should allow those who have the capabilities to provide humanitarian help.”

Following a recent meeting with UNICEF, Tia, the health minister, acknowledged that camp shortages did not just include food supplies but also stretched to healthcare and adequate access to vaccinations. He said that he would be calling on government colleagues to address the situation.

“We will be ready to talk and confront the local health ministers and also the official from the humanitarian affairs [ministry],” he said. “We want things to go smoothly because our target is to help the ordinary people.”

---

**Tajeldin Abdhalla Adam, a Radio Dabanga reporter and IWPR trainee, works on Fi al Mizan.**

**Katy Glassborow is producer of a radio show for Radio Dabanga about justice issues, called Fi al Mizan.**

**Simon Jennings is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.**

**Assadig Mustafa is a Radio Dabanga presenter and also works on Fi al Mizan.**

---

**Online version of this article is available at:**

[go.iwpr.net/drWkBn](http://go.iwpr.net/drWkBn)

**For more stories by the authors go to:**

[iwpr.net/people/tajeldinabdhalla](http://iwpr.net/people/tajeldinabdhalla)

[iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow](http://iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow)

[iwpr.net/people/simonjennings](http://iwpr.net/people/simonjennings)

[iwpr.net/people/assadigmustafa](http://iwpr.net/people/assadigmustafa)

**IWPR’s International Justice/ICC programme:**

[iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc](http://iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc)

**Fi al Mizan programme:**

(IWPR/Radio Dabanga co-production)

[iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur](http://iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur)

# UN Accused of Caving In to Khartoum Over Darfur

Agencies said to be reluctant to confront Sudanese government about obstructions to humanitarian aid effort.

**Tajeldin Abdhalla**

**Katy Glassborow**

**Simon Jennings**

**Assadig Mustafa Zakaria Musa**

Amid growing levels of malnutrition, illness and instability in Darfur displacement camps, United Nations aid and peacekeeping agencies are being accused of capitulating to pressure and interference from the Sudanese government and failing in their duty to protect civilians.

Human rights and civil society activists are joining the region's internally displaced people, IDPs, and Sudanese opposition politicians in calling on UN agencies not to duck their responsibilities in order to keep Khartoum on side.

This comes as conditions in IDP camps deteriorate, with the government delaying food and medical supplies and many children often too hungry to go to school. One Sudanese opposition politician interviewed for this report claimed that some of the weakest camp inhabitants have started to die because of the shortages.

"International humanitarian capacities have been seriously eroded and impaired to a point that leaves Darfuris in a more vulnerable position now than at any other time since the counter-insurgency operations and forced displacements in 2003," reads a recent paper, *Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur*, published by Tufts University in the United States.

Since 2003 when fighting between the government and rebel groups began in earnest in Darfur, millions of civilians have been forced to leave their villages – which were frequently razed to the ground – and have since lived in displacement camps or fled to eastern Chad.

They have relied heavily on international aid to survive, but according to research by IWPR and Radio Dabanga (an IWPR partner radio station based in Holland), the government – which sees IDP camps as strongholds of rebel support – has consistently worked to thwart the distribution of food, restrict access of relief workers and control the movements of peacekeepers.

In October last year, the head of the UN children's agency UNICEF, Nils Kastberg, told *Fi al Mizan*, a radio programme made by IWPR and Radio Dabanga, that Khartoum is preventing his agency from releasing reports about malnutrition in IDP camps.

"Part of the problem has been when we conduct surveys to help us address issues, in collaboration with the ministry of health, very often other parts of the government such as the humanitarian affairs commission interferes and delays in the release of reports, making it difficult for us to respond [in a] timely [manner]," he said.

"We are raising these issues with the government at the moment that the humanitarian affairs commission should not interfere with the release of these reports."

UNICEF reported early last year that as many as 21 nutritional surveys were conducted since June 2009, but only seven have been released by the humanitarian affairs commission. Six of those showed malnutrition rates of between 15 and 29 per cent, the report stated.

Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court, ICC, say that restricting humanitarian aid is further evidence of a continued genocidal campaign against the people of Darfur by the Khartoum government.

But of the UN agencies engaged in Darfur, only UNICEF and the peacekeeping operation in Darfur, UNAMID, have talked publically about government interference.

Other UN agencies approached by IWPR have declined to speak about the problem, saying this could jeopardise their entire aid operations and lead to them being thrown out of the country. Sudanese opposition politicians say that by failing to speak out, UN agencies are in effect collaborating with the government.

The Sudanese government, meanwhile, insists that it is meeting its obligation to look after IDPs in Darfur.

"I don't think the government will try in any way not to fulfil its commitments or not to perform its responsibility as regards the humanitarian access," Mohammed Eltom, from the Sudanese embassy in London, told IWPR.

## Walking a Tightrope

According to UN officials who spoke to IWPR, the Sudanese government is actively preventing UN agencies which operate on the ground from accessing information necessary for compiling much needed reports on the humanitarian situation in the region.

But there are reasons why agencies fail to stand up to Khartoum and confront the interference. Khartoum has proved its willingness to expel international aid organisations which it fears are working

against it. In March last year, in the wake of the arrest warrant issued for President Omar al-Bashir by the ICC, 13 aid agencies were expelled on suspicion of collaborating with the court.

As a consequence, UN agencies feel they must tread very carefully. "We try to produce very credible reports based on impartial information," one UN source told IWPR. "But this requires us to be careful not to describe all access problems as the government deliberately trying to obstruct humanitarian aid."

"We don't have the access we'd like into camps in Darfur, or the knowledge we need."

UN and diplomatic sources who spoke to IWPR say Khartoum is deliberately undermining humanitarian efforts.

"The clear pattern is one of obstruction and making it more difficult for humanitarian organisations to do their work. The ones more concerning to the government are the UN agencies [because] the view that the government has is that it is heavily influenced by UNSC (UN Security Council) members," Richard Williamson, the former US envoy to Sudan under the George Bush's administration, told IWPR.

UNAMID is regularly blocked from accessing areas or denied entering airspace over Darfur. Sometimes, this is out of concern for UNAMID personnel. More often, say IDPs, this is because the government wants to bomb suspected rebel strongholds without UNAMID interference.

"The government is very sceptical of international humanitarian groups and the UN. They have not provided safe travel lanes to flow through Sudan. This got worse right after ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir, which was not only a reaction but a way to recalibrate their control," Williamson said.

The Tufts paper says Khartoum has blocked humanitarian agencies from entering what it describes as unsafe areas. But even that curb on their operations - premised on

concerns for their safety - does not account for the erosion of humanitarian capacities, according to the research.

"Where humanitarian access has been maintained there have been serious delays and blocking of key information, for example, the failure to release regular nutrition survey reports, which contain the vital humanitarian indicators that enable the severity of the humanitarian crisis to be judged," the Tufts paper says.

Meanwhile, people in IDP camps say the situation is deteriorating but no alarm bells are being raised. "Children don't have enough food to eat," a Sudanese health worker in one of the Darfur camps told IWPR.

Since early 2009, both UNICEF and the UN aid coordination agency OCHA have failed to regularly publish key humanitarian updates, relied upon by various actors to gauge need in Darfur.

"Crucial information about the humanitarian situation is lacking. There are serious issues with the proper validation of the nutrition survey reports and their immediate release - without such data neither the government nor the international community can properly understand the severity of the humanitarian situation or the efficacy of the response," the Tufts paper says.

Human rights groups say that this is part of the government strategy to keep attention off Darfur, in the run-up to the January 9 referenda on independence for South Sudan and the Abyei region - especially in the wake of the US promising Sudan that if the votes go smoothly, it will take the country off its terror black list.

"This is part of an attempt to stifle information coming out of Darfur at a very critical time when the government is under a lot of pressure to make the world believe that Darfur is no longer a problem and the conflict is over. We know from our own investigations that this is simply not true," said Jehanne Henry, Human Rights Watch's Sudan expert.

But humanitarian agencies are faced with a real dilemma: do they stay in the country put up with interference and shut up, or do they speak out and risk millions of civilians being further cut off from essential aid?

A lawyer for an international NGO told IWPR that UN agencies can and should speak out. "UN agencies should have always the authority to make statements and disagree with the government. That is fully in their mandate. If they don't [speak out], then they don't do the basics in the best interests of the people they have to protect," the source said.

Meanwhile, Eltom, of the Sudanese embassy in London, said that the humanitarian affairs commission, widely regarded as the government agency most responsible for interference, does not obstruct any aid organisations on the ground.

"The main purpose of even establishing the humanitarian affairs commission was to facilitate the work of the humanitarian workers as a one-stop-shop for all of the humanitarian work and to try to coordinate with other

agencies as regards all the paperwork and the logistics, whatever," he told IWPR.

"It is facilitating rather than restricting the humanitarian work. As long as we have this kind of partnership with the UN in particular and the AU (African Union) then I think one of the things we can think of is a kind of capacity building for the personnel in the administrative units working with the humanitarian aid... problems are administrative, not part of the policy of the government at all."

## Contradictory Objectives

But it is clear that the government – which as a sovereign state has primary responsibility for the humanitarian and peacekeeping effort – has different objectives to the non-governmental humanitarian groups and peacekeeping agencies on the ground.

Observers say that hampering access to IDPs is part of a planned strategy aimed at controlling the displacement camps – which the government views as breeding grounds for rebel support – and returning their inhabitants to their former villages.

But IDPs who want to return home have told IWPR that they are scared to do so with no guarantee of security. They also say the government has given their land away to Arab militias.

UN sources have confirmed to IWPR that aid operations are restricted by government interference. "We are concerned about the humanitarian situation. There is much we'd like to do which we can't in terms of access," one source said.

Humanitarian workers face constant threats of kidnapping. Three Latvian pilots working for the UN's World Food Programme were recently released, having been abducted at gunpoint from their homes in Nyala, south Darfur, a few weeks earlier.

"The security situation is difficult, and things like kidnapping create a climate of fear. Staff used to be taken from the camps, but now they are taken even from guesthouses in the towns. Many NGOs have pulled out. There are a lot of very nervous staff in Darfur," the UN source said.

This has left some UN agencies needing to negotiate with the government in order to fulfil basic tasks.

Speaking to IWPR and the Radio Dabanga programme Fial Mizan, Ibrahim Gambari, head of the UNAMID operation, accepted there were levels of interference but that UNAMID was addressing them.

"I've continuously engaged the government at the highest levels to increase access to UNAMID and the humanitarian community, to ensure full freedom of movement," Gambari said. "We are making some progress. The government has assured us now that restrictions, when they occur, will be limited in scope, in area, and in full consultation with UNAMID."

"As far as UNAMID is concerned, when we experience restrictions we immediately protest, and most times they are removed."

When pushed on whether it is appropriate to negotiate on the provision of peacekeeping services, Gambari said that this is the reality of operating on the ground.

"In most cases of course we get issues resolved at the local level. In any case, our attitude is not confrontation, because we have a mission to fulfil, civilians to protect, and communities to serve, and if we can get this done through negotiations we do it while insisting on our rights," he said.

Scores of IDPs interviewed by IWPR on the ground have said they are confused by what they see as the inaction of UN agencies in the face of government interference.

"It seems that the UN agencies and the international organisations working in Darfur have been deceived by the government. The government is not honest in giving them the true reality on the ground. Even the UNAMID is not reflecting the true situation of Darfur," said one IDP interviewed by IWPR and Radio Dabanga.

He claimed that the UN has failed the people of Darfur, "It is the UN which should speak about the situation better – the violence and the genocide. But [the agencies] don't want to say the truth, whether they are too weak to or don't want to."

"UNAMID has been appointed by the UN to represent the UN and to provide the world with accurate information about the situation, and to reveal all the facts on the ground, but it hasn't done that so far."

Another IDP told IWPR and Radio Dabanga, "UNAMID cannot move one inch without government approval. This is not the kind of mechanism you want to help in bringing about peace. If UNAMID is a neutral UN body, it shouldn't act by orders from the government. UNAMID is accountable before the UN and not the government of Sudan."

Responding to the IDPs' frustrations, Gambari, head of the UNAMID operation, said, "It is confusing, but it is also frustrating for us. But then, all those who have influence on all the parties should exercise it, so that all restrictions by whosoever should not take place. We have a Security Council mandate which we are doing our best to implement but we have some realities on the ground which we have to deal with."

Gambari was also clear that UN agencies should speak up about government interference and the restrictions they face.

"They should tell them. We cannot be thrown out of the country because we are here with the consent of the government, and jointly authorised by both the African Union and the United Nations. What they are afraid of saying for fear of being thrown out, they can tell us (UNAMID) and we will say it. Both privately and publically," he said.

## Planned Strategy

Still, the threat of expulsion is very real for UN agencies on the ground. Williamson, the former US envoy to Sudan, said this is part of the government's agenda, aimed at how best to handle the UN in order to meet its own objectives.

"I think there is long standing tension [between UN agencies and the government] and the support is intentionally sporadic in part to keep UNICEF, WFP and other agencies off balance," Williamson told IWPR. "It's a way to assert control, it's a way to lower expectations, to manipulate the aid agencies and exert control over the camps which are seen as a safe haven for [those who oppose the government]."

Williamson said "that's why in IDP camps you lose electricity which is needed to bring fresh water - to keep leaders off balance and strengthen the [regime's] hand against anti-government forces in the camps. It's creating more trouble in the camps".

Salih Osman, a Khartoum-based Sudanese lawyer and member of the Communist Party, has called on the UN agencies to speak up and says they have a duty not to allow themselves to be manipulated by the government.

"The most shameful thing is that even until now; [the UN] doesn't even report or release their reports about this humanitarian disaster. The leaders of these agencies are compromising their positions with the safety and interests of the victims. They do that to be allowed to continue to work there. This is corruption," Osman said.

Henry of HRW said that the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the UN mission to report accurately on what is happening in Darfur.

"There is a need for the UN mission leadership to actually want to be reporting on what is going on in Darfur and describing it accurately. But apparently it is not making this a priority any more. Instead, it seems the mission has been more focused on other priorities responsive to the government's new strategy for Darfur, which prioritises accelerating IDP returns back to home villages," Henry said.

"Until the situation improves from a security and human rights perspective, the idea to accelerate returns does not seem very appropriate. This seems more the UNAMID's focus, these days, since the government announced its new strategy in Darfur. Not so much the human rights mandate, which was at the heart of the original UN mission in Darfur several years ago."

Scores of IDPs Radio Dabanga and IWPR have spoken to say that they want to return home only when their safety and security can be guaranteed.

The government, they say, has so far made no effort to ensure their safe return to their villages, or ensure their safety once they have gone back. Little effort has been made to rebuild destroyed villages, nor to provide clean water supplies or education or medical services, they say.

As such, Osman, the lawyer and opposition politician,

said the UN's cooperation with the government amounted to collusion and was part of the international failure of the people in Darfur.

The Sudanese government, meanwhile, sees the cooperation of the UN as an endorsement of its strategy for Darfur - namely the return of IDPs to their villages.

"All these players, the UN, the African Union, the government of Sudan and even the IDPs themselves, now are the main endorsers of the new strategy of the government, that has been [in place] for one year. A new way of trying to solve the issue of Darfur," Eltom said.

"The UN, the AU and other [parties] have all endorsed the new strategy laid out and adopted by the government and they were part of adopting it.

"I don't think at this time anyone can come up and say that the government is trying to restrict or to hinder [the aid operation]."

## Keeping Silent

The dilemma facing UN agencies is whether to risk a further government clampdown by publicly denouncing its interference or try their best to work within the constraints to deliver at least a certain level of aid.

"It's always a challenge for the UN how public to go with their protest," Williamson said.

Osman, however, was unequivocal about the responsibility of the UN. "This is a huge failure of UN agencies and UN organisations responsible for the protection of the people," he said. "Why are they there? Why are they accepting the situation, where violations are occurring in the way that no one on the outside can imagine."

In a written statement to IWPR, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, Georg Charpentier, said, "UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan. WFP, for example, is presently distributing food to 90 per cent of the target population in Darfur. The government has recently extended fast track procedures for NGOs in Darfur until January 2012.

"Humanitarian partners have committed to resolving outstanding issues through constructive engagement with government to build confidence and trust through such mechanisms as the High Level Committee on Darfur."

Charpentier added that humanitarian agencies "have positively received the government's strategy for Darfur which draws clear links between the need for security, reconciliation, development and partnership. Humanitarian partners remain committed to meeting the population's needs in the context of an evolving situation, and have supported IDP return where assessed as voluntary and appropriate."

But HRW has called for agencies to be more open about the challenges they face in Darfur.

"We wish the human rights section would be a lot more vocal and that they would be reporting properly what is going on. They've got a dual reporting line so they can use their connection with the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights] in Geneva to publicly report on the human right situation but they don't, they're being very silent," Henry said.

Meanwhile, the UN continues to try to negotiate its way - normally behind closed doors - to improving the situation.

"We want to create an environment in which we can do our work. We want to bring the various actors around the table. I would not be comfortable in negotiating away our humanitarian principles," a UN source said. "We bring together all the actors, but don't make decisions in a vacuum. When we find obstacles, we have to address them."

As guests of the Sudanese government, it is questionable how much sway even the UN has over the way it can operate in Darfur.

"The international humanitarian community now exerts ever-decreasing control over its activities as demonstrated by the expulsion and withdrawal of some international staff from the region, and also by the inability of international agencies to access the affected population and undertake proper humanitarian assessments," the Tufts paper says.

## Lack of Reporting

The situation in Darfur is compounded by the upcoming referenda in South Sudan which has seen international attention taken off Darfur, observers say.

The Tufts paper says this is even reflected in the work that the UN is doing on the ground.

"Even for UN agencies the focus appears to have shifted to the south and the issues arising from the forthcoming [referenda]," the research says. "Less is known and reported about the Darfur situation. The UN reporting on the humanitarian situation in Darfur has dried up."

Displacement camp leaders say that the levels of malnutrition, and consequent child mortality, is on the increase - although, in a written statement to Fi al Mizan last year, the World Food Programme said that it is managing to get adequate quantities food to people in camps.

Nonetheless, Children interviewed by IWPR and Radio Dabanga in the camps say that they are often too hungry to go to school, or have to go out to work to get money to feed their families.

One camp leader told IWPR and Radio Dabanga, "There is a big shortage in the food supply, and this is affecting children. Babies who depend on their mothers breastfeeding are suffering mostly because their mothers don't have enough food, and in turn they are not getting enough milk."

Medical workers in the camps say that clinics for children have been shut down since the expulsion of NGOs, and that medical supplies, as well as food, are subject to delays at the

hands of the government.

"There were special centres to treat malnourished children in camps, but they've been shut down and there are now hundreds of children who are malnourished and need urgent help," another camp leader said.

Osman said that inside the camps millions are in severe need. "I've been there, and I can assure you that children and women and elderly people have started to die due to the absence of basic needs like medicine," he said.

## Varying Interference

The levels of interference appear to vary at different times and according to which government official is engaged on any given element of the humanitarian response.

"It would be easy if the [commission for humanitarian affairs] was working openly against IDPs, but often they are working with us, but then the military intelligence or police get in the way," a UN source explained. "Often one part of the government says yes, and another says no."

"We'd like to work around [the commission], but we can only work in the country with government approval."

According to Kastberg of UNICEF, "Sometimes it is security services that hinder access or delay access, sometimes it is the humanitarian affairs office that delays the release of nutritional surveys. Sometimes it is delays in granting permissions. It is different sections of different institutions which interfere in our work."

Within the government itself there is also confusion about the extent to which interference is a problem and varying levels of acknowledgement over the inability to meet IDPs' needs. Despite assurances from Eltom on the humanitarian situation, Sudan's health minister, Abdullah Tia, told Fi al Mizan that the government has not been able to cope since NGOs were expelled.

"Unfortunately, despite all the talk about the 'Sudanisation' of the relief work, it has not been a success," Tia said. "The only thing [the ministry of humanitarian affairs] did was review the work of some [international] organisations and try to coordinate with them, but the ministry of humanitarian affairs ultimately was not able to meet expectations."

Gambari of UNAMID also acknowledged instances where various government agencies do not seem to be reading from the same page. "I must say that unfortunately, many times instructions are given by Khartoum which are do not translate fully into the behaviour of some officials on the ground," he said.

He said he was working to address government interference at the local level, "I am in communication with the three walis (state governors) constantly; I am in touch with the presidential adviser in charge of Darfur, and the ministry of foreign affairs. They are sending messages as appropriate to the local authorities, and will continue to do so."

## International Failure

As well as pressing agencies on the ground to stand up to government interference, commentators have acknowledged that the international community has done little to embolden aid workers in Darfur to challenge Khartoum.

"I'm disappointed US policy has been less robust than it was under President Bush. I think it has had consequences on the ground... and failed to support the UN and other interventions trying to help those victimised in Darfur," Williamson said.

"I can't promise you would get a solution if you did this [more robust approach] but that you allow the situation to get worse if you are less vigorous about pushing for accepted norms."

However, Williamson also acknowledged the realities of the situation.

"I think they [the UN] should be [more robust] but I'm not unsympathetic to the considerations they have," Williamson said. "The [Sudanese government] has slowly allowed itself to be isolated. The priority of staying in power exceeds the wish to be embraced by the international community. I think we should be doing more. Obama has not robustly condemned attacks and I thought we should [have been] more robust on the expulsion of the 13 aid agencies."

Gambari called on the international community to get behind the agencies on the ground in Darfur, "We cannot be on our own. They have a responsibility to also support us fully. That includes talking to the government."

Some put the situation down to the Security Council's apparent unwillingness to take a firmer stance on Darfur. Having referred the atrocities to the ICC in 2005, the council has been silent since.

"The politics of the Security Council were obviously very important in understanding why the UN was not more robust in its monitoring and human rights reporting," Henry of HRW said. "I think it is pretty obvious that the UN Security Council is hampered by the politics of [its] various [members]."

However, others insist that instead of relying on the UN in New York, UN agencies on the ground should speak out if there is evidence to suggest the government is not fulfilling its obligations.

If they fear expulsion, David Donat-Cattin of Parliamentarians for Global Action, a network of over 1300 legislators from more than 100 elected parliaments around the world, says the agencies could present a united front.

"If they would act in a harmonised way, then the question for the government would be whether it could expel everyone. The Sudanese are very smart diplomatically and politically speaking, they know how to alternate the carrot and the stick. The government is not willing to completely isolate itself. It didn't withdraw from the UN charter after the Bashir arrest warrant," Donat Cattin said.

Osman says the international community has a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to protect lives of millions of survivors in Darfur.

"They need to lobby the government of Sudan. Otherwise, they are facilitating the government's campaign of ethnic cleansing in Darfur," he said.

Tajeldin Abdhalla Adam, a Radio Dabanga reporter and IWPR trainee, works on Fi al Mizan.

Katy Glassborow is producer of a radio show for Radio Dabanga about justice issues, called Fi al Mizan.

Simon Jennings is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

Assadig Mustafa is a Radio Dabanga presenter and also works on Fi al Mizan.

Online version of this article is available at:  
[go.iwpr.net/g9MDvI](http://go.iwpr.net/g9MDvI)

For more stories by the authors go to:  
[iwpr.net/people/tajeldinabdhalla](http://iwpr.net/people/tajeldinabdhalla)  
[iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow](http://iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow)  
[iwpr.net/people/simonjennings](http://iwpr.net/people/simonjennings)  
[iwpr.net/people/assadigmustafa](http://iwpr.net/people/assadigmustafa)

IWPR's International Justice/ICC programme:  
[iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc](http://iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc)

Fi al Mizan programme:  
 (IWPR/Radio Dabanga co-production)  
[iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur](http://iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur)

# Funding False Hopes in Darfur

Governments that pay for humanitarian effort must act to curb interference by Khartoum.

**Katy Glassborow**  
**Simon Jennings**

Countries that fund the humanitarian aid effort in Darfur should pressure the Sudanese government to stop hampering the delivery of assistance to people displaced by conflict in the region, experts on international intervention in conflict areas say.

The United Nations agencies on the ground handling the delivery of food and humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons, IDPs, and carrying out peacekeeping missions in Darfur have been accused of allowing their work to be compromised by Khartoum's interference.

However, Jan Pronk, who served as the UN special representative in Sudan from 2004 to 2006, told IWPR that there was only so much the UN agencies on the ground could do in negotiations with Khartoum, and that it was up to the countries that fund them to back them up properly.

"It is the duty of donor countries to take on the fight themselves... As [funders of] the humanitarian agencies it is their money, it is their taxpayers' money," Pronk said. "Not doing so amounts to hiding behind the Security Council; hiding behind the fact that the Security Council is being paralysed."

The UN Security Council can only increase the pressure on Khartoum with the agreement of its member states, which to date has not been forthcoming.

The war in Darfur has caused the displacement of 2.5 million people since 2003. Government aircraft have razed villages to the ground, and militias allied with Khartoum are accused of major human rights abuses targeting local civilians.

The International Criminal Court, ICC, has issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir to face charges of genocide and charged two of his associates with war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

ICC prosecutors say the government's efforts to block aid from reaching civilians and the dire conditions still facing IDPs amounts to further evidence of genocide.

As peace talks stall between rebel groups and the government, fighting has recently escalated again in Jebel Marra and other parts of Darfur. The UN says that between

December 2010 and mid-March 2011, fighting has caused the displacement of a further 70,000 Darfuris, though camp leaders put this figure much higher.

## Access To Crisis Areas Blocked

Darfur has prompted one of the largest international donor efforts of recent years. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2003, the United States has provided more than three billion US dollars' worth of food and humanitarian assistance to Darfur and eastern Chad, where many refugees have gone.

The UK has been a consistent donor, including annual contributions of 12 million pounds (almost 20 million dollars) in 2010 and 2011 to the UN's Common Humanitarian Fund. Last year, the fund received over one billion dollars in funding for Sudan.

The international aid effort is being hampered by the Sudanese government, and aid sector insiders say this has reached unprecedented levels in recent months, making life impossible for IDPs who rely on aid to survive.

Government agencies regularly prevent peacekeepers from UNAMID, the African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur, and various UN agencies from travelling to locations where they do not want an international presence. Local officials, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services, NISS and the Humanitarian Aid Commission, HAC, run by Khartoum, are also accused of threatening aid workers and creating a climate of fear that is paralysing the aid effort.

The HAC is working to the Sudanese government's agenda, so its objectives differ from those of the UN agencies and of the donor countries which fund their work.

"Very often, national security or military intelligence or even – when you get to the roadblock – just the regular armed forces, will deny you access," a Khartoum-based diplomat who asked to remain anonymous said. "This happens not only to the international NGOs; it also happens to UNAMID."

He added that Jebel Marra was one of the areas to which international organisations were denied access, usually for reasons of "security".

Where aid is able to get through, agencies find themselves at the beck and call of the Sudanese government. The diplomat said this was “a very dangerous road to go down, because you will buy into the government’s strategy, which is not really needs-based as it should be.”

The consequences of this kind of interference are dire. UN staff, including the head of the UNICEF agency for children, Nils Kastberg, have reported being unable to carry out assessments of humanitarian needs in Darfur.

If individuals working for international agencies on the ground raise the alarm, or even challenge the government over cases of interference, they risk being thrown out of the country.

“They often just get told by the NISS, ‘you have to leave because we can’t guarantee your safety any more,’ the diplomat said. “If the NISS says you leave Darfur, you don’t hang around and see if maybe they’re bluffing. You leave. It is a veiled threat. It does happen.”

Without access to large areas of Darfur and with civilian populations stranded, agencies are struggling even to calculate the extent of the need on the ground, let alone ensure that supplies reach the right places.

“I think [the knowledge of humanitarian needs on the ground] is accurate in places but in certain areas we don’t have that visibility,” Nancy Lindborg, of the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, said.

As a consequence, IDP camp leaders report a shortage of food and medical supplies across the region, leading to a rise in child malnutrition and mortality. Children say they are too hungry to go to school and often have to take on work to help pay for food, which is purchased on the camp’s black market.

“The assessments are a huge issue,” the Khartoum-based diplomat told IWPR. “You are reliant on the HAC. In a sense they will tell you, ‘yes there are needs over there’ and they will guide you to government-held territory where they feel there are needs.”

The Khartoum-based diplomat expressed concern that such behaviour equated to the HAC misdirecting the aid effort to areas that suit the government, rather than where the need is greatest.

“You go down a very slippery slope, because you see some NGOs already starting to work in different areas they have been pointed to by HAC, just to make sure they can keep working in other areas,” the diplomat said.

## Government Denies Hampering Aid Effort

The Sudanese government says its various arms and agencies present no threat to international personnel, and do not obstruct international aid efforts.

“With the exception of some areas where there are security problems, we don’t impose any restrictions on UN agencies,” Sudanese minister for humanitarian affairs, Mutrif Siddig, said.

Where there are security issues, Siddig says that the government leaves it up to the UN how to proceed.

“We provide the advice, we provide the information but we leave it for... the UN agencies,” he said.

The government argues that aid should be used to help people return to their homes rather than sustain them in IDP camps.

“We encourage the return of IDPs to their original villages on a purely voluntary basis and [given] conducive conditions,” Siddig said. “We do this process collectively with different UN agencies and international NGOs. It is not something that is imposed by the government on IDPs.”

At the same time, the government regards the IDP camps as strongholds for rebel activity, so reducing the numbers of people there can be seen as its way of weakening armed resistance.

The lack of security and infrastructure across Darfur means that in reality, many IDPs are unable to return. In addition, as Khartoum is party to the ongoing conflict, it is difficult to see IDP returns as viable in the near future.

“The government says it is going to provide those kind of conditions for the IDPs to return, and is pushing the NGOs [to accept this]. At the same time it is shooting, killing, bombing. It is still using militias of one tribe or another with impunity,” said Fouad Hikmat, an advisor with the International Crisis Group.

UN agencies on the ground in Sudan are constantly negotiating with the government to win access to areas of humanitarian need. The UN’s “high-level committee” meetings with the government have yet to yield substantive results.

“We are not just holding meetings to have more meetings,” the diplomat added. “We have meetings because we need to resolve certain issues. And they never get resolved.”

“You get the most glowing promises and ‘everything is fine’ sort of talk at the Khartoum level, and then when you actually go down to Darfur, it’s business as usual – access is denied, flights can’t take off. People get visits from NISS in the middle of the night.”

The official previously in charge of delivering aid to Darfur’s displaced people – former humanitarian affairs minister Ahmad Harun – has been indicted by the ICC for crimes against humanity in the region.

## Who Should Lead on Pressuring Khartoum?

While UN member states do not openly complain about Sudanese government interference, diplomats and aid workers have stressed the need to pressure Khartoum to cooperate with international agencies.

"We will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and press all parties to ensure that there is the access and security that enables us to deliver aid in the most accountable way possible," Lindborg said. "You need to have the UN having direct conversation with Khartoum and you also need to have direct contact through the donors, both pressing the importance, with the common message, of the need for security and access," she said. "It is not pointing fingers, [saying] 'you take the lead'. It is that both need to be doing that."

Behind closed doors, UN agencies are appealing to international donors to give them more support in dealing with Khartoum.

"We are constantly asking donors to be more vocal in outlining the challenges that we face, and in helping us to overcome these," a UN source said, speaking to IWPR on condition of anonymity.

Diplomats interviewed by IWPR said they were right behind the aid effort, but some insisted it was for the UN rather than individual donor countries to take the lead on negotiations with Khartoum.

"This is a concern as much as to the UN as it is to us. We believe very strongly that the UN has responsibility [to take it up with Khartoum]," the Norwegian ambassador to Khartoum, Jens-Petter Kjemprud, said.

"When specific events come up we might raise it with the government but mainly we make our feelings heard through the UN. I think the UN should speak for its member states, and can best do so when they have such a big mission on the ground."

IWPR contacted the UN missions of three of the Security Council's permanent members – the US, Britain and France – but none would speak on the record about Sudanese interference in UN aid efforts in Darfur or what they were doing to counter the problem.

One diplomatic source said embassies regarded it as suicidal to speak out against Khartoum on the issue.

"If you stick your head out, there is a huge chance of it getting chopped off so that's why we try and push the UN to do it. With diplomatic missions it is a lot more difficult [to get expelled], but they can make your life really hard," the diplomat explained.

## UN as "Whipping-Boy"

Observers have questioned the approach taken by the UN on the ground, and demanded a more robust response to government interference – particularly from UNAMID, which has recently pledged to take a tougher stand.

The UN, however, is itself caught between standing up to the government at the risk of expulsion and allowing its activities to be controlled by Khartoum. UN workers on the ground say it is not just up to them to ensure aid gets through.

The UN source IWPR spoke to said, "I've been in many meetings where donors have been sometimes challenging us as agencies, and say, 'Why are you allowing the government to push you around, and why aren't you... being tougher?' And we say to them, 'Why don't you speak up for a change, why don't you take this up with the government?'"

Without coherent backing from the Security Council, the individual UN agencies lack any comprehensive structure and the ability to speak with one voice.

"There is no such thing as the UN as such," Mukesh Kapila, who served as UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan between 2003 and 2004, told IWPR. "The UN is a cluster of agencies each of which have their own culture [and] personality... so you can't expect the UN to behave in a coherent manner, or even those within the same agency to do that."

Kurt Mills, who lectures in international rights at Glasgow University, drew parallels with other recent areas of conflict, saying, "You very rarely see situations where the UN actually does what it needs to do and supports the humanitarians in the way they need to be supported. Bosnia, Rwanda – exactly the same thing"

This lack of structure, Mills says, makes it all the more important for UN member states to give aid agencies their support on the ground.

"It is very easy to say, 'we'll give this over to the UN,' he said. "The UN is always a sort of convenient whipping boy, a convenient excuse for not doing those things that you say you want to do but you don't actually want to do."

## Losing Sight of The Big Picture

Some analysts say that as well as a lack of coordination among donors and individual agencies, the international community's overall strategy is confused. The pressing need to get humanitarian aid to IDPs in Darfur has led to a tendency to focus on that as the core issue, and forget about the larger context of conflict.

The Security Council referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC in March 2005, but subsequently, as Sudan failed either to cooperate with the court or cease the bombing campaign in Darfur, the international community's resolve appeared to falter.

The dilemma was whether to pressure Khartoum on the ICC indictment or continue to be able to deliver humanitarian aid.

A leaked British diplomatic cable from March 2009, published by the Wikileaks website, acknowledges that pressing for a Security Council resolution on Sudan would probably strengthen calls for the ICC indictment to be deferred for “humanitarian reasons”. This, it said, would put the UK “in a difficult position between support for the ICC and humanitarian relief in Darfur”.

When IWPR asked the Foreign Office to speak about on its position, the response was that the policy was not to comment on leaked cables.

However the cable appears to reflect a conundrum facing donor countries. With myriad issues to address, focusing on aid provision may offer the most convenient form of action.

Kapila is concerned that focusing mainly on the humanitarian agenda has overshadowed the broader need to address underlying issues in Darfur and hold to account those responsible for committing atrocities there.

Kapila says this separation of the issues has played into Khartoum’s hands. Even before the ICC indictments, he said, “I remember being told that the whole thing in Darfur was a humanitarian issue and that, as humanitarian coordinator, my job was to get humanitarian aid in, and I wasn’t doing my job properly if I didn’t get enough aid in.

“This was of course absolutely what the Sudanese wanted to hear, because what it meant was you could avoid tougher questions on the violence and the political issues involved.”

Instead of allowing this to happen, Kapila argues that “it is important that humanitarian aid is not used as a distraction for the other issues... One needs to take a system-wide approach, like for example bringing justice.”

Donor states understandably do not want to withhold or jeopardise aid flows, which would harm the people of Darfur.

“There are many reasons for pouring in money. One reason is to genuinely want to help. The other reason is, knowing that one can’t help very effectively, to salve one’s conscience,” Kapila said. “So as long as one is pouring in money, even if it is ineffective, it is a way of saying we are doing something. And money is at least the easiest thing to do. And governments can be quite cynical in that regard.”

Asked about the money USAID puts into aid for Darfur, Lindborg acknowledged it was not all getting through, but said, “We continue to press UNAMID and we continue to press the government to ensure that there is greater access and greater security, specifically so we are able to ensure that the assistance is being effective, that it is reaching the people who most need it.”

## Collective or Unilateral Sanctions?

Major western states provide voluntary assistance direct to UN agencies on the ground, over and above their contributions as member states. Some observers say this gives them an added responsibility to take a stand on the UN’s behalf.

The US and UK make regular statements about what they expect of Khartoum. Asked what steps the US was taking to prevent interference with the aid process, Lindborg said it was a matter of “continual conversation, continual bringing to [Khartoum’s] attention specific incidents where there have been either delays or lack of permission to move forward”.

Pronk argues that individual statements have very little effect on the Sudanese authorities.

“European and US statements do not mean anything,” he said. “They are not reading those statements in Khartoum, they don’t care. They only care if there is a very concrete consequence to non-implementation. That comes down to the joint force of the donor countries with regards to violations of humanitarian law.”

Broader international sanctions have not had much effect, either. A UN arms embargo has been in place since 2005, and the European Union has not signed off on the Cotonou agreement promoting trade and development because of Sudan’s refusal to recognise the ICC.

Rather than political statements, both Pronk and Kapila would like to see concrete action that hurts Khartoum economically and politically, including steps outlined in previous Security Council resolutions.

“I would say the balance is not right, and clearly more pressure could be put,” Kapila said. “But this depends on the tools of that pressure. This is where sanctions and other means to hurt those who are being obstructive are probably relevant.”

Article 41 of the UN Charter allows for “complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.” While previous resolutions on Sudan have threatened such action, none has been implemented by the Security Council.

Pronk says individual donor countries could implement such threats on their own without waiting for the Security Council to act. He raised the prospect of such a series of measures against Khartoum by individual states – withdrawing from investments in Sudan, and imposing “smart sanctions” that would harm the regime rather than the people.

“You have to be active,” he said. “Countries are very slow and lazy. If countries say, ‘we cannot do much more without taking a common position,’ it is another example of not taking the whole issue very seriously”.

## Multiple National Agendas

The lack of a common position and the will to stick to it is a recurring theme in the international approach to Darfur.

“Governments have their self-interest and they have their genuine differences. Some want to go at it hard, some want to go at it soft. [This] reflects national traditions on how they conduct their foreign affairs,” Kapila explained.

Pronk is critical of mixed messages that some western governments send to Khartoum. For example, government ministers visiting the Sudanese capital and the IDP camps in Darfur often sent signals that differed from the position taken by their ambassador.

“Mixed messages are paralysing the operation because they are always being abused by the Sudanese politicians and diplomats. They are so skilled at being able to play parties against each other,” said Pronk.

Furthermore, individual member states of the European Union behaved differently from the EU’s agreed common position, Pronk said. Although the EU denied Khartoum the Cotonou agreement, individual states such as the UK continue to pursue bilateral trading relationships with Sudan.

Washington, too, has more than one set of priorities in dealing with Sudan – on the one hand taking a tough line on Darfur, while on the other engaging Khartoum in the “war on terror”, Pronk said.

“There are governments who think that they have an interest in keeping good relations with the Khartoum regime. That is the major issue and that is true particularly for the US,” he said. “The US has spoken out harshly, but Khartoum thought that they didn’t mean it because the US needed the regime in Khartoum – both were fighting the same enemy.”

IWPR asked the US State Department to comment on this point, but it declined to do so.

Khartoum sees differing western approaches as a weakness to be exploited. Pronk gives the example of expulsions of foreign NGOs, where country concerned protested, but others remained silent for fearing that “their” NGOs would be thrown out as well.

Another reason why the international community may be taking a softer line than it might on Darfur issues is the situation around South Sudan, where a recent referendum resulted in a decision to secede. The future of South Sudan will require delicate diplomatic work with Khartoum, with many issues yet to be worked out, not least Abyei, a border district whose future status as part of northern or southern Sudan has yet to be determined by referendum.

According to Hikmat, the Sudanese government realises it has a strong hand because its continuing cooperation over southern secession is seen as essential. As he put it, “the government now has a sort of international immunity”.

“They are not afraid of international decisions or war sanctions or whatever, knowing that they are needed on the other side,” he added.

Some analysts argue that even if additional sanctions were put in place, it would still not give western donor countries the necessary leverage to pressure Khartoum into cooperating.

Much of the investment in Sudan now comes from the Middle East and China, so that some see western economic leverage as insignificant.

As a result, Sudan is able to build infrastructure and extract oil leaving Khartoum in a strong position to be obstinate on Darfur aid issues.

“Sudan still functions as a country. They were fighting a war. They were digging the oil. They are doing all these things,” Hikmat said.

## Time For Action

As efforts to prevent Khartoum from obstructing the flow of aid continue to stall, observers say individual donor countries need to do more to track where their money is going, if only to provide accountability.

“Victims are losing trust. They feel the international community has let them down,” Salih Osman, a lawyer and member of the Sudanese parliament, said. “People abroad don’t know about the situation. In Europe, you pay money to the operations, but you are not concerned how the money is being used.”

He continued, “There are a lot of mechanisms to tell Khartoum that it is time to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered to the people who need it, who are already perishing.”

According to the UN source who spoke to IWPR, donors are increasingly trying to keep track of where their money goes.

“Donors are increasingly coming to us and saying they want to ensure tighter monitoring and more accountability for the projects they are funding,” the source said. “We are seeing them become even more strict on this in the Darfur context at the moment.”

The State Department would not give IWPR an interview on the issues raised in this report, but sent a statement saying it was committed to ensuring the aid effort could proceed without hindrance.

“The people of Darfur have suffered for too long, and the international community must be more resolute in moving the parties toward full resolution of the conflict,” it said. “We continue to press the Sudanese government to ensure the security of civilians, and have urged the government of Sudan to provide unfettered access to UNAMID, international aid workers and NGOs.”

Britain's Foreign Office turned down a request for an interview on its actions to counter Sudanese interference in the humanitarian aid effort.

However, the minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, wrote a letter to IWPR saying the Foreign Office continues "to call on the GoS [government of Sudan] and all armed groups to allow UNAMID and humanitarian agencies full and unhindered access across Darfur. [The] ambassador in Khartoum regularly raises this issue with the GoS and we will continue to do so.

The letter said that Britain would continue to "work closely and engage with the North", but that "this must not come at the expense of our concerns over serious ongoing violations of human rights in Sudan and the lack of access for vital humanitarian work in Darfur". It added that there was no question of Britain prioritising commercial links over "Sudan's very real and pressing human rights problems".

Analysts monitoring the aid situation see little room for optimism unless the broader international approach to Darfur changes. Without wider international support, humanitarian agencies will remain at the mercy of the Sudanese government, to the detriment of the civilians they are trying to help, they say.

"Humanitarian actors are faced with situations where they're in there without any proper back up," Mills said. "It comes back to all these interests that are at stake that have little to do with actually protecting people."

IWPR's UN source said that if aid agencies are to be able to operate effectively in Darfur, the donor countries must set aside their individual priorities and establish a common position.

"In cases where we do have strong alignment amongst all the main donors, it is much more effective than in cases where we don't. Coordination amongst donors is also very important. And they know that themselves," he said.

"They know that sometimes they pull in different directions and, tactically, look at things differently. But it is not just for us to tell donors how they should be effective; it is for them to resolve some of these issues amongst themselves."

---

**Katy Glassborow is producer of a radio show for Radio Dabanga about justice issues, called Fi al Mizan.**

**Simon Jennings is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.**

---

**Online version of this article is available at:**  
[go.iwpr.net/eMzAWk](http://go.iwpr.net/eMzAWk)

**For more stories by the authors go to:**  
[iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow](http://iwpr.net/people/katyglassborow)  
[iwpr.net/people/simonjennings](http://iwpr.net/people/simonjennings)

**IWPR's International Justice/ICC programme:**  
[iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc](http://iwpr.net/programme/international-justice-icc)

**Fi al Mizan programme:**  
(IWPR/Radio Dabanga co-production)  
[iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur](http://iwpr.net/programme/scale-darfur)

