

Documenting Atrocities in Darfur

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Summary

The conflict between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and two rebel groups that began in 2003 has precipitated the worst humanitarian and human rights crisis in the world today. The primary cleavage is ethnic: Arabs (GOS and militia forces) vs. non-Arab villagers belonging primarily to the Zaghawa, Massalit, and Fur ethnic groups. Both groups are predominantly Muslim.

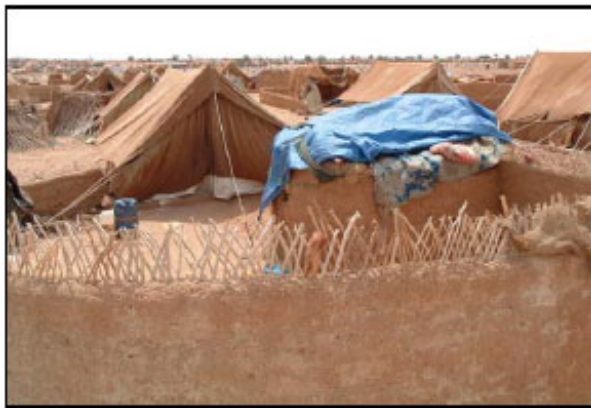
A U.S. Government project to conduct systematic interviews of Sudanese refugees in Chad reveals a consistent and widespread pattern of atrocities committed against non-Arab villagers in the Darfur region of western Sudan. This assessment is based on semi-structured interviews with 1,136 randomly selected refugees in 19 locations in eastern Chad. Most respondents said government forces, militia fighters, or a combination of both had completely destroyed their villages. Sixty-one percent of the respondents witnessed the killing of a family member; 16 percent said they had been raped or had heard about a rape from a victim. About one-third of the refugees heard racial epithets while under attack. Four-fifths said their livestock was stolen; nearly half asserted their personal property was looted. This assessment highlights incidents and atrocities that have led to the displacement of large portions of Darfur's non-Arabs.

An Atrocities Documentation Team, assembled at the initiative of the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), conducted interviews in Chad in July and August. The team was primarily composed of independent experts recruited by the Coalition for International Justice (CIJ), and also included experts from the American Bar Association (ABA), DRL, and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) as well as the US Agency for International Development (USAID). INR was responsible for compiling the survey data and producing the final report. USAID met the costs of the CIJ and ABA.

Humanitarian Crisis

As of August 2004, based on available information, more than 405 villages in Darfur had been completely destroyed, with an additional 123 substantially damaged, since February 2003. Approximately 200,000 persons had sought refuge in eastern Chad as of August, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports another 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in western Sudan. The total population of Darfur is 6 million. The lack of security in the region continues to threaten displaced persons. Insecurity and heavy rains continue to disrupt humanitarian assistance. The UN World Food Program provided food to nearly 940,000 people in Darfur in July. Nonetheless, since the beginning of the Darfur food program, a total of 82 out of 154 concentrations of IDPs have received food, leaving 72 locations unassisted. Relief and health experts warn that malnutrition and mortality are likely to increase as forcibly displaced and isolated villagers suffer from hunger and infectious diseases that will spread quickly among densely populated and malnourished populations. The health situation for the 200,000 refugees in Chad is ominous. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that one in three

children in the refugee settlements in Chad is suffering from acute malnutrition and that crude mortality rates are already well above



Refugee camp in Chad. Photo: Atrocities Documentation Team

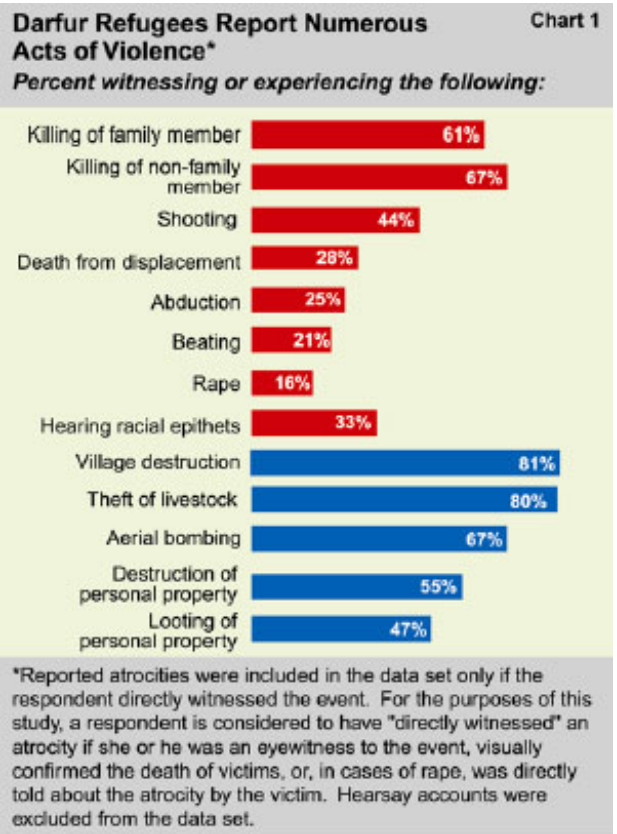
emergency threshold levels (one per 10,000 per day).

Human Rights Crisis

The non-Arab population of Darfur continues to suffer from crimes against humanity. A review of 1,136 interviews shows a consistent pattern of atrocities, suggesting close coordination between GOS forces and Arab militia elements, commonly known as the Jingaweit (Janjaweed). ("Jingaweit" is an Arabic term meaning "horse and gun.")

Despite the current cease-fire and UN Security Council Resolution 1556, Jingaweit violence against civilians has continued (cease-fire violations by both the Jingaweit and the rebels have continued as well). Media reports on August 10, 16, and 19 chronicled GOS-Jingaweit attacks in Western Darfur. In addition to their work on the survey, the interviewers had the opportunity to speak with newly arrived refugees who provided accounts that tended to confirm press reports of continuing GOS participation in recent attacks. Refugees who fled the violence on August 6 and 8 spoke with the team, providing accounts consistent with media reports: joint GOS military and Jingaweit attacks; strafing by helicopter gun ships followed by ground attacks by the GOS military in vehicles and Jingaweit on horseback; males being shot or knifed; and women being abducted or raped. Respondents reported these attacks destroyed five villages. Multiple respondents also reported attacks on the IDP camp of Arja.

The UN estimates the violence has affected 2.2 million of Darfur's 6 million residents. The GOS claims it has been unable to prevent Jingaweit atrocities and that the international community has exaggerated the extent and nature of the crisis. The GOS has improved international relief access to IDPs in Darfur since July, but problems, including lack of security and seasonal rains, have hampered relief programs. Survey results indicate that most Sudanese refugees state that Jingaweit militias and GOS military forces collaborate in carrying out systematic attacks against non-Arab villages in Darfur.



Ethnographic Background

Darfur covers about one-fifth of Sudan's vast territory and is home to one-seventh of its population. It includes a mixture of Arab and non-Arab ethnic groups, both of which are predominantly Muslim (see map, p. 6). The Fur ethnic group (Darfur means "homeland of the Fur") is the largest non-Arab ethnic group in the region. Northern Darfur State is home to the nomadic non-Arab Zaghawa but also includes a significant number of Arabs, such as the Meidab. Sedentary non-Arabs from the Fur, Massalit, Daju, and other ethnic groups live in Western Darfur State. The arid climate and the competition for scarce resources over the years have contributed to recurring conflict between nomadic Arab herders and non-Arab farmers, particularly over land and grazing rights. Various ethnic groups have fought over access to water, grazing rights, and prized agricultural land as desertification has driven herders farther south.

Political and Military Conflict

Ethnic violence affected the Darfur region in the 1980s. In 1986, Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi armed the ethnic-Arab tribes to fight John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). After helping the GOS beat back an SPLA attack in Darfur in 1991, one of these Arab tribes sought to resolve ancient disputes over land and water rights by attacking the Zaghawa, Fur, and Massalit peoples. Arab groups launched a campaign in Southern Darfur State that resulted in the destruction of some 600 non-Arab villages and the deaths of about 3,000 people. The GOS itself encouraged the formation of an "Arab Alliance" in Darfur to keep non-Arab ethnic groups in check. Weapons flowed into Darfur and the conflict spread. After President Bashir seized power in 1989, the new government disarmed non-Arab ethnic groups but allowed politically loyal Arab allies to keep their weapons.

"Slaves, run! Leave the country. You don't belong; why are you not leaving this area for the Arab cattle to graze?"

—Words spoken to a Zaghawa refugee interviewed in Kounoungo.



Am Nabak Refugee Camp, an interview location in eastern Chad. Photo: Atrocities Documentation Team

In February 2003, rebels calling themselves the Darfur Liberation Front (DLF) attacked GOS military installations and the provincial capital of Al Fashir. The DLF complained of economic marginalization and demanded a power sharing arrangement with the GOS. In March 2003, the DLF changed its name to the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), intensified its military operations, unveiled a political program for a "united democratic Sudan," and bolstered its strength to some 4,000 rebels. The Justice and Equality Movement, with fewer than 1,000 rebels, was established in 2002 but has since joined the SLM/A in several campaigns against GOS forces.

The GOS has provided support to Arab militiamen attacking non-Arab civilians, according to press and NGO reports. Refugee

accounts corroborated by US and other independent reporting suggest that Khartoum has continued to provide direct support for advancing Jingaweit. Aerial bombardment and attacks on civilians reportedly have occurred widely throughout the region; respondents named more than 100 locations that experienced such bombardment (see map, p. 8). The extent to which insurgent base camps were co-located with villages and civilians is unknown. The number of casualties caused by aerial bombardment cannot be determined, but large numbers of Darfurians have been forced to flee their villages. According to press and NGO reports, the GOS has given Jingaweit recruits salaries, communication equipment, arms, and identity cards.

Current International Response

On July 30, 2004, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1556, which demanded that the GOS fulfill commitments it made to disarm the Jingaweit militias and apprehend and bring to justice Jingaweit leaders and their associates; it also called on the GOS to allow humanitarian access to Darfur, among other things. The UN placed an embargo on the sale or supply of materiel and training to non-governmental entities and individuals in Darfur. The resolution endorsed the African Union deployment of monitors and a protection force to Darfur. It requested the Secretary-General to report on GOS progress in 30 days and held out the possibility of further actions, including sanctions, against the GOS in the event of non-compliance.

The Security Council has expressed its deep concern over reports of large-scale violations of human rights and

international humanitarian law in Darfur. The main protection concerns identified by the UN and corroborated by the Atrocities Documentation Team include threats to life and freedom of movement, forced relocation, forced return, sexual violence, and restricted access to humanitarian assistance, social services, sources of livelihood, and basic services. Food security has been precarious and will probably worsen as the rainy season continues. Many displaced households no longer can feed themselves because of the loss of livestock and the razing of food stores.

"This place belongs to Arab tribes. Blacks must leave."

—Words spoken to a Zaghawa refugee from Gasumba.

Relief agencies' access to areas outside the state capitals of Al Junaynah, Al Fashir, and Nyala was limited until late May. Visits by UN Secretary-General Annan and Secretary of State Powell in June 2004 brought heightened attention to the growing humanitarian crisis. As a result, the GOS lifted travel restrictions and announced measures to facilitate humanitarian access. Nonetheless, serious problems remain, specifically capacity, logistics, and security for relief efforts. USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team and other agencies have deployed additional staff to increase emergency response capacity.

Refugee Interviews--Survey Results

The Atrocities Documentation Team conducted a random-sample survey of Darfurian refugees in eastern Chad in July and August 2004. The team interviewed 1,136 refugees, many of whom had endured harsh journeys across the desolate Chad-Sudan border.

A plurality of the respondents were ethnic Zaghawa (46 percent), with smaller numbers belonging to the Fur (8 percent) and Massalit (30 percent) ethnic groups. Slightly more than half the respondents (56 percent) were women. (See map, p. 6, showing ethnicity of respondent refugees.)

Analysis of the refugee interviews points to a pattern of abuse against members of Darfur's non-Arab communities, including murder, rape, beatings, ethnic humiliation, and destruction of property and basic necessities. Many of the reports detailing attacks on villages refer to government and militia forces, preceded by aerial bombardment, acting together to commit atrocities. Respondents said government and militia forces wore khaki or brown military uniforms. Roughly one-half of the respondents noted GOS forces had joined Jingaweit irregulars in attacking their villages. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents said GOS forces had acted alone; another 14 percent said the Jingaweit had acted alone. Two-thirds of the respondents reported aerial bombings against their villages; four-fifths said they had witnessed the complete destruction of their villages. Sixty-one percent reported witnessing the killing of a family member. About one-third of the respondents reported hearing racial epithets while under attack; one-quarter witnessed beatings. Large numbers reported the looting of personal property (47 percent) and the theft of livestock (80 percent).

Rape as a Weapon

Sixteen percent of the respondents said either that they had been raped or had heard about a rape from a victim:

- One woman told the team that she had been raped repeatedly in front of her father by members of the Sudanese military and Jingaweit. Afterward, her father was dismembered in front of her.
- Another woman recounted how five Jingaweit men held her for a week against her will and repeatedly raped her in front of her nine-month-old daughter. At one point, the woman was allowed to pick up the crying baby. When the baby continued to cry, one of the men grabbed the child and hit her with the butt-end of a rifle. The mother and child escaped and made their way to a refugee camp in southern Chad.

Most reports followed a similar pattern:

- 1) GOS aircraft or helicopters bomb villages.
- 2) GOS soldiers arrive in trucks, followed closely by Jingaweit militia riding horses or camels.
- 3) GOS soldiers and militia surround and then enter villages, under cover of gunfire.
- 4) Fleeing villagers are targets in aerial bombing.
- 5) The Jingaweit and GOS soldiers loot the village after most citizens have fled, often using trucks to remove belongings.
- 6) Villages often experience multiple attacks over a prolonged period before they are destroyed by burning or bombing.

When describing attacks, refugees often referred to GOS soldiers and Jingaweit militias as a unified group; as one refugee stated, "The soldiers and Jingaweit, always they are together." The primary victims have been non-Arab residents of Darfur. Numerous credible reports corroborate the use of racial and ethnic epithets by both the Jingaweit and GOS military personnel; "Kill the slaves; Kill the slaves!" and "We have orders to kill all the blacks" are common. One refugee reported a militia member stating, "We kill all blacks and even kill our cattle when they have black

calves." Numerous refugee accounts point to mass abductions, including persons driven away in GOS vehicles, but respondents usually do not know the abductees' fate. A few respondents indicated personal knowledge of mass executions and gravesites.

A subset of 400 respondents were asked about rebel activity in or near their villages. Nearly nine in 10 said there was no rebel activity before the attack. Nine percent noted rebels were in the vicinity; 2 percent said the rebels were present in their villages. The overwhelming majority (91 percent) said their village was not defended at all against the attack. One percent asserted their village had been successfully defended and another 8 percent cited an unsuccessful defense.

Respondents reported ethnic tensions in the region had risen over the past few years. For example, markets in which non-Arabs and Arabs had previously interacted have become segregated, and almost all villages are now said to be ethnically homogenous. According to many of the interviewees, GOS soldiers and Jingaweit attacked villages because of their non-Arab populations; men of fighting age have been abducted, executed, or both; and women and girls have been abducted and raped.

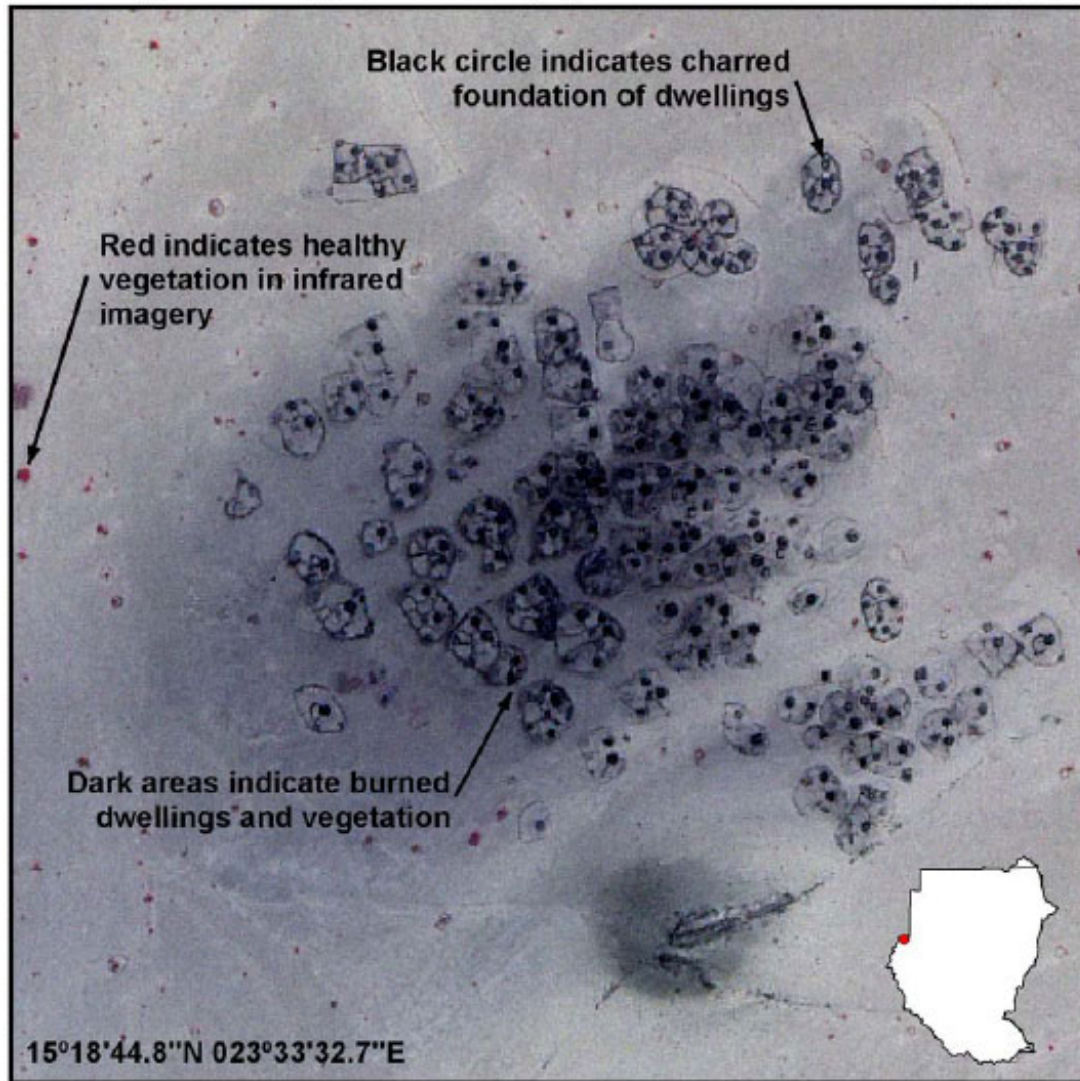
Refugee Interviews--Survey Methodology

This report is based on results from personal interviews conducted by three teams between July 12 and August 18, 2004. DRL, USAID, and the Coalition for International Justice jointly designed the questionnaire in conjunction with other NGOs. INR provided technical assistance on questionnaire design and survey methodology. The teams used a semi-structured interviewing approach that permitted the refugees to give the broadest possible accounts of the events they had experienced. The interviews were conducted in 19 locations in eastern Chad, including UNHCR camps and informal settlements.

Refugees were selected using a systematic, random sampling approach designed to meet the conditions in Chad. Interviewers randomly selected a sector within a refugee camp and then, from a fixed point within the sector, chose every 10th dwelling unit for interviewing. All adults were listed within the dwelling unit, and one adult was randomly selected. This methodology ensures the results are as representative as possible in light of refugee conditions. Interviews took place in private, with only the refugee, a translator, and the interviewer present.

Destroyed Village of Darurja, Sudan

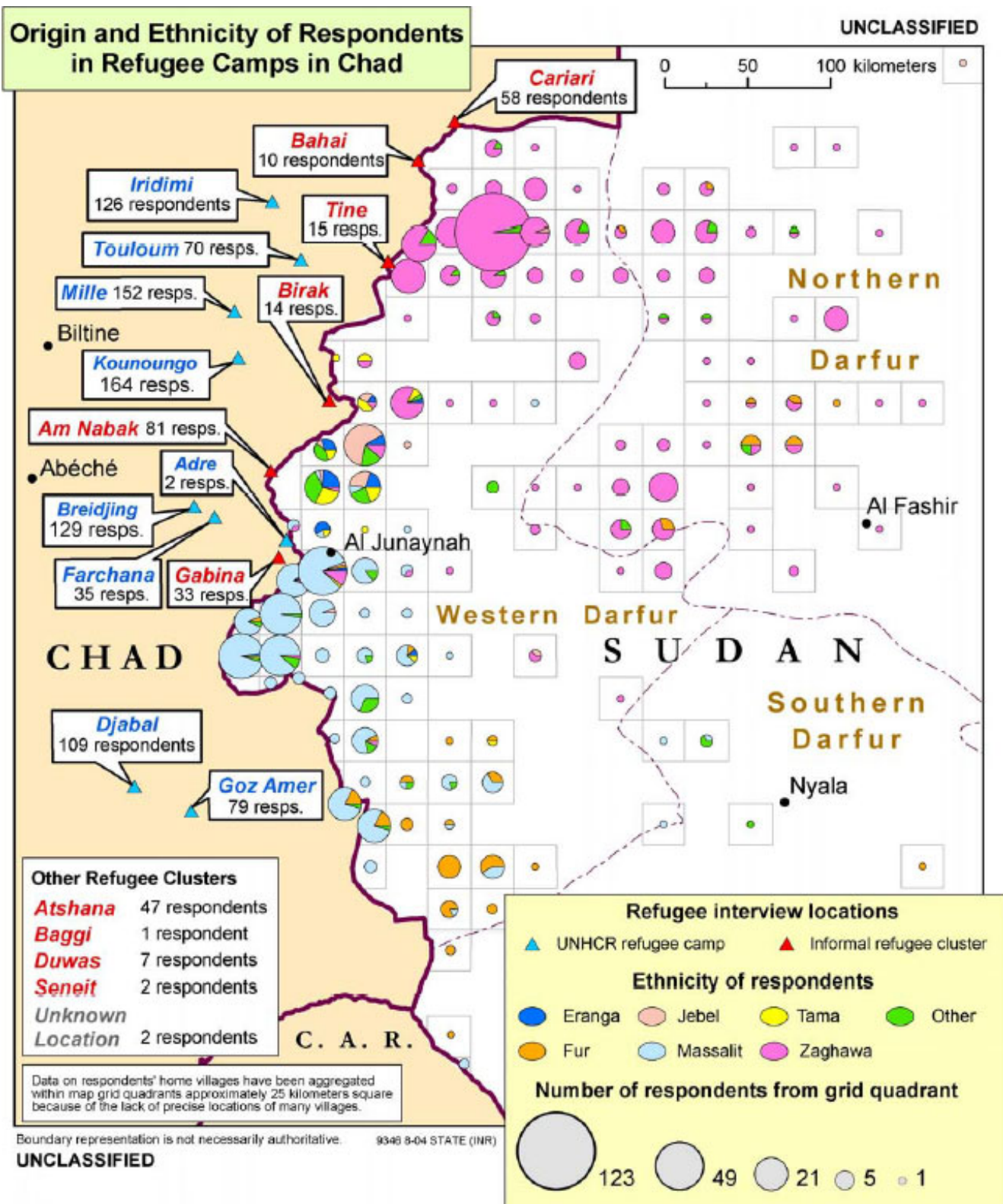
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A refugee interviewed in Bahai camp reported that his home in Darurja was destroyed in February 2004 by Jingaweit who torched his village, stole his cattle and belongings, and raped 5-10 young women. The Jingaweit said "we will kill all blacks—this is not your homeland."



Several characteristics of the survey must be underscored. First, accounts of atrocities may be dated, depending on when the individual refugee fled his or her village. Second, the data may actually undercount the extent of atrocities

because mass attacks often leave few survivors. Third, most respondents come from villages within 50 miles of the border in Western Darfur and Northern Darfur States. Fourth, it is very likely that rapes are underreported because of the social stigma attached to acknowledging such violations of female members of one's family.

The results are broadly representative of Darfurian refugees in Chad but may not be representative of internally displaced persons still in Darfur because they were not included in the sample. A margin of error for this sample cannot be calculated because of the lack of accurate demographic information about the refugee camps and settlements. The methodology was designed to achieve as broadly representative a sample as was feasible under the prevailing conditions. Dates of events reported by refugees frequently utilized the Islamic calendar; these dates were then converted to dates on the Gregorian calendar. (See map, p. 6, showing interview locations.)

A Refugee's Story

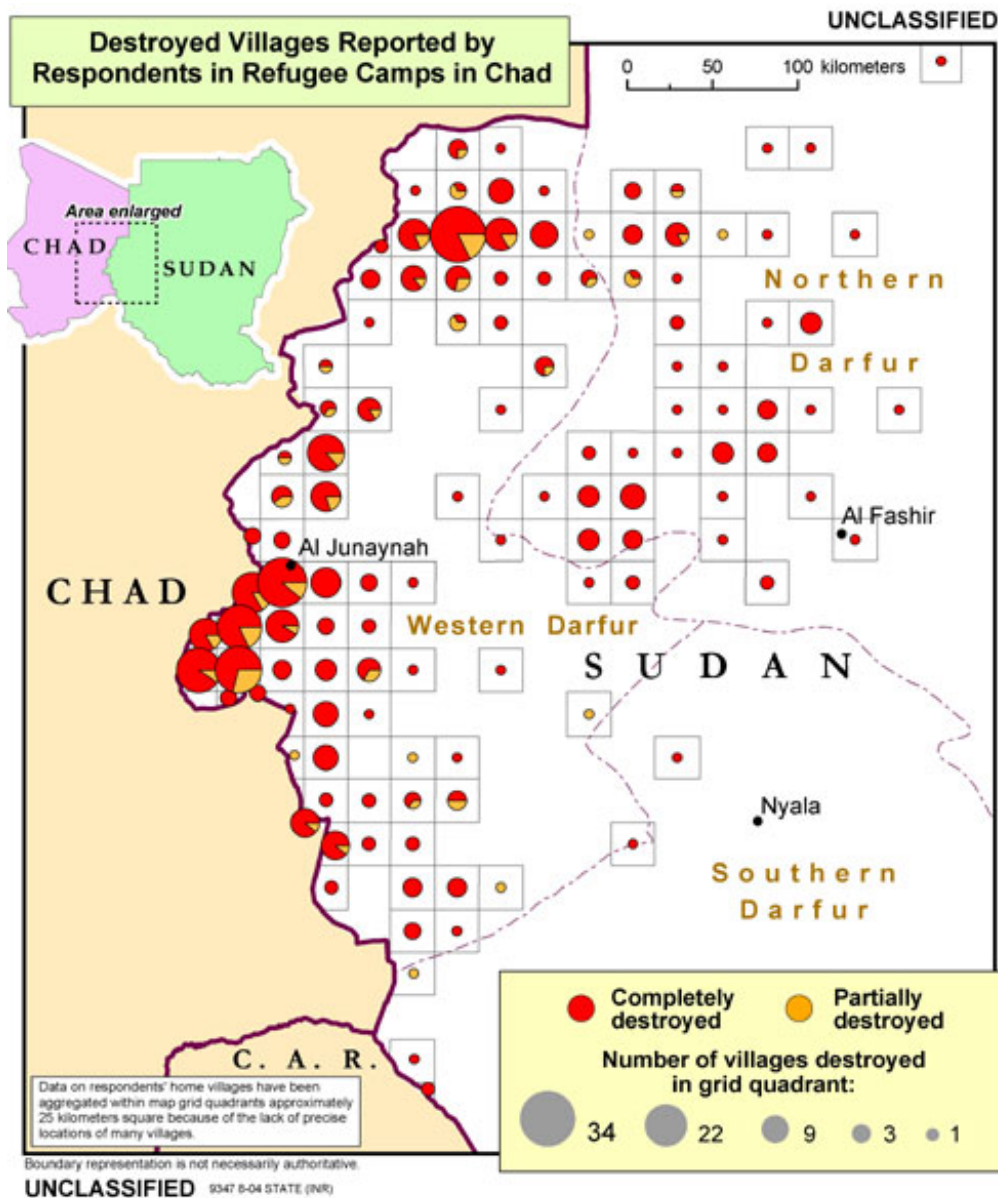
At Am Nabak, the team interviewed a woman living in the camp with her two-year-old daughter and husband. Her four-year-old child has been missing since her village was bombed by an aircraft and attacked by ground forces. She noted that the village was bombed repeatedly, and then the military entered along with Jingaweit militia. While ground forces set fire to the homes, helicopter gun ships shot at villagers trying to escape.

She explained that when fleeing, she was able to bring only one child. "You try to take all your children with you but sometimes you can't and have to quickly decide to take one or two of them. You hope that those able to run will follow you."



Burned shops in an abandoned village between Al Junaynah and Sisi. GOS military forces and Jingaweit have systematically burned and looted towns and villages of tribal groups who the government claims are supporting opposition forces. Photo: USAID

The field data for the 1,136 interviews were compiled using a standardized data entry process that involved the collection and coding of detailed information from each refugee respondent's set of answers. The researchers then used a statistical program to aggregate the data and analyze the results.



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