

# Darfur People: Too Black for the Arab-Islamic Project of Sudan, Part I

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**Prelude:** *A battle cry of the Arab militia/ Janjaweed in attacking their African neighbours: 'whoever dies goes into martyrdom and whoever survives gets the wealth of the slaves' (almat mat shabeed, wal bia yabil leebo mal al abeed)*

## Author's Testimony

The eminent Sudanese scholar Francis Deng once said: 'what divides us is what we don't talk about' What we don't talk about is in effect a taboo that has stifled debate and prevented true discussion among past and current Sudanese scholars. This situation has made it impossible to debate certain issues whose examination is crucial to solving the most obstinate of Sudan's persistent problems.

Well, in some way, that taboo has now been broken. A milestone in its destruction was the courageous publication of the *Black Book of Sudan*. With up to 300,000 dead, four million displaced, and the numbers are expected to rise, the Darfuris are left with no time for niceties, and certainly not for taboos (UNHCR 2005, AFP 2005). As Martin Luther King expressed it, an abscess can only be cured if its ugly pus is fully exposed to the air. Let that be the mission of this article.

Before we proceed any further, let me define where I stand with regard to the current crisis in Darfur. From the reader's perspective, discerning the author's label is crucial to buying into the goods. As a matter of principle and like many others the world over, I take the view that war is neither an ideal nor an effective way of conflict resolution, particularly if the conflict is primarily political in nature, as is the current problem in Darfur. As a matter of fact, most of us, from and in Darfur have never been party to the decision to raise arms against the government of Khartoum. This is despite the fact that many Darfuris, including government supporters, concur with the grievances and the objectives of Darfur rebels but do not condone raising arms to pursue these objectives.

However, once the armed struggle started, most Darfuris found themselves with little choice but to take a stand and only one stand. Let us, Darfuris, and particularly those who are deemed too African for Sudan, face it; we simply cannot afford to let the armed

movement fail. Fortunately, the objectives of the Darfur Movement need not be entirely achieved through armed struggle. It is not too late to lay down arms and continue the struggle through peaceful negotiation of the problem.

## Darfur Problem

Scholars working on the current Darfur crisis have often looked inside the region in search of its causes. Not surprisingly, this approach reduces discussion of the problem to localized indices like drought, environmental degradation, conflicts over local resources and tribalism (see below). This paper departs from this approach for two reasons. Firstly, Darfur is not an isolated region. It is part and parcel of a national structure in which the policies of Khartoum governments have played a great part. Secondly, Darfur is not in any way unique in its problems. Its plight is shared by other regions in Sudan and with which it is intricately connected. Darfur should be seen as an indivisible part of a defective whole that is bedevilled by the hegemony of a favoured segment over the rest of Sudan. To this I turn now.

## Darfur, identity and history

Darfur, the size of France, covers an area of 160,000 square miles. It has a population of 6 million, which constitutes roughly a fifth of Sudan's current population. Darfur is inhabited by numerous ethnic groups that are all Muslim. The majority of Darfur's population is now classified as Black African, some retaining their original African languages but using Arabic as a lingua franca. Others have long lost their indigenous languages and have been speaking Arabic for centuries. Major ethnic groups in Darfur on the so-called Black African side are the Fur, the Masaalit, the Zaghawa the Salaamat, the Meidobe

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and the Berti. On the Arab side are the Baggara, the Rizaigat, the Zayadia, the Maalia and the Beni Halba. It must be noted that this list is not exhaustive and that division between one group and another is fluid, ideological and subject to continuous change.

The population of Darfur is categorised in different ways, each time according to the purpose at hand. Sometimes, the division is based on language whereby you have Arabic speakers versus non-Arabic speakers. Equally you have distinctions based on mode of livelihood whereby you have pastoralists, sedentary farmers and urban dwellers. Yet another division stresses the extent of ideological claim to Arab identity or culture. A far less useful way is to use ethnic boundary as a marker between one group and another like the Fur, the Zaghawa, the Masaaleit, etc. (see Ibrahim 2004 and 1984, Abu Ahmed and Harir 1982, O'Fahey 1980, Abdul Jalil 1984 and Sulaiman 1993).

The current crisis has simplified and rigidified the above categories. It precipitated a new dominant criterion that operates as an ideology that is consciously enacted on the ground in forging alliance among various ethnic groups. Darfur can now be primarily divided into two broad categories, Arabs, mostly but not all nomads, who have a strong claim to Arab culture and ancestry, and Black Africans (Zurga) who regard themselves as essentially non-Arab and African in origin. Surprisingly,

many ethnic groups in the latter category speak Arabic as their mother tongue and have, at least until a few years ago, courted both Arab ancestry and culture. But for many of these now, Africanism has finally superseded language, Islam and the influence of Arab culture as a determining factor of identity. For them, Africanism connotes both historic belonging to the land and pride in their darker colour but above all distinctiveness from their new Arab opponents.

Information on Darfur's history is still scant and hard to come by. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century right through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Darfur was dominated by three Kingdoms, the Dajo between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Tunjur who ruled Jebel Mara until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the Keira Dynasty which was only partially defeated by the Turks in 1874. Hence Darfur was, to a great degree, a separate sultanate until it was annexed to the current Sudan by the British in 1916. With the exception of a brief period of its history (1887–1898), Darfur stood as separate kingdom whose borders encroached into Chad but occasionally moved east deep into the current Region of Kordofan. (O'Fahey 1969 and 1980, Theobald 1956, see also Ibrahim 2004).

The paucity of knowledge of Darfur's history is not accidental. Rather it is a logical outcome of the orchestrated state campaign to obliterate the history of non-Northern Sudanese. It is to be noted that since



**Burned Village. (Darfur photos credit of Commandant Bernard Markey, Irish Defence Forces)**

Independence of the country in 1956, the Sudan has been controlled by three Arabized ethnic groups that originate in the northern region of the Sudan to the detriment of all others, both in the northern region and other parts of the nation. The success of their campaign to undermine others is so spectacular that many of the target populations have accepted their banishment from history. In official Sudanese discourse, Darfur has always been presented as a region of no history in line with other marginalized areas in the Sudan. As a child growing up in western Darfur, I was taught to look beyond the Red Sea and explore my history as part of the Arab peninsula and its glorious Arab Islamic Empire. When I was a young boy at Alfashir secondary school, our four classrooms were named after the famous four Islamic Khalifas, i.e. successors of the Prophet Mohammed (Abu Bakr, Omer, Othman and Ali).

When Arab-Islamic history gives way, it is replaced by symbols from northern Sudan and rarely by those from the marginalized areas in the country. The hostels in both the intermediate and secondary schools that I attended bore the names of Sudanese historical figures like Tihraqa, Nijoomi, Abu Likailik and Dinar; the last being the only Darfuri who was occasionally honoured by this deliberate reinvention of history.

The onslaught on Darfur history was so overwhelming that the local people too participated in it. The blatancy of this project to clear history of non-Arab elements was so much exemplified by an order of a then fanatic Minister of Culture and Information (1980s) to decree that all pre-Islamic symbols in the National Museum in Khartoum be removed and replaced by artefacts that reflected Islamic culture and history. Such a vision of history has now become evident among the marginalised, particularly in Darfur. My own District town of Umkeddada in North Darfur is now divided into four residential quarters officially known as Muzdalifa, Safa, Taqwa and Alsalam. Two of these names refer to pilgrimage spots in Saudi Arabia and the third (Taqwa) can simply be translated as – Islamic – ‘piety’. Only one of the four chosen names (Alsalam) refers to a general human virtue but that too equally resonates with Islamic philosophy, teaching and thought. After all, the word Salam, a derivative of the term ‘Aslama’ (‘became a Muslim’), is central to Islamic greeting formulae and is also used in Islamic prayers.

The evolution of a nation is a long and arduous process that cannot be pinned down to a definite date in its history. Sudan as a nation is no exception and its birth cannot be referenced to a single date. Nonetheless there are certain landmarks in its history and I will take the liberty of starting from just over a century ago. The Mahdist state in Sudan, 1885–1898 was a landmark in the formation of the present official Sudanese national identity but only if we leapfrog history and omit the golden era of Amara Dunqas, the king of the first Black Sultanate in central Sudan. The Mahdist era was important not only due to its ability to bring together a substantial territory of the current Sudan under one rule, but because it was appropriated by the colonial invaders and used as a basis for modern Sudan. The cleavage of that Mahdist state is central to our plight today. So much energy, historical

revisionism, national and western scholastic endeavour have reduced that cleavage to simple religious differences. Hence you have northern Muslims versus Christian-cum-animist south, a division that is now reflected in the north-south civil war brought to an end by the accession of Garang’s party to power in Khartoum in July 2005. But the Mahdist state reflected the realities of Sudan differently and this image might be a better base for analysing current Sudan.

In the Mahdist reign the state witnessed intense struggle between two main groups, the Ashraf of the northern Sudan that lies north of Khartoum (honourable descendents of the Prophet Mohammad), who identified with the Mahdi, and the Gharraba (Westerners of Darfur and Kordofan), who sided with Khalifa Abdullahi, the architect of the Mahdi’s regime. It is to be noted that Khalifa Abdullahi was Almadi’s Deputy but later became his successor, hence the title ‘khalifa’ (‘successor’ in Arabic). In some ways, the seeds of what was to become the nucleus of Sudanese identity were sown. The Ashraf were to be staged as the core of that identity as against the Gharraba who occupied a position of inferiority in the new dispensation. Although the Mahdist movement was instigated by the ills of Turkish rule (1881–1885), which included slavery, the abolition of slavery was not central to Mahdist policies. In Mahdist policies slavery was tolerated if not encouraged by the state. More damagingly, a slave mentality was augmented during the Mahdist regime through the institutionalisation of Arab hegemony during the reign of Khalifa Abdullahi who ran the state after the Mahdi’s death. Ironically, the Mahdi did little about slavery in the Sudan under the pretext that there was no clear statement regarding its abolition in the Koran. At the same time, he channelled considerable energy into banning the use and sale of tobacco, which did not feature in the Koran (Hashim 2004:12).

It is possible to argue that Khalifa Abdullahi had no choice, as slavery was historically part and parcel of the Islamisation of the Sudan. For example, the 14<sup>th</sup> century intrusion of Islam into north Sudan was signalled by the Baqt Treaty which was made conditional on the provision of slaves to the Islamic state in Egypt. The Turkish invasion of the Sudan itself was driven by several motives, one of which was to procure slaves. In line with the culture of the Arab slave traders who operated in the Sudan between the fourteenth and the nineteenth century, any (black) Sudanese was generally enslavable. Since then, black Sudanese have become associated with slaves. It has to be conceded, however, that the association of blackness with slavery in the Arab mentality or in Arab mythology/history dates back much earlier.

Khalifa Adbullahi, the Mahdi’s successor, found himself in an unenviable position. To begin with, he was a Fulani adopted into the Baggara Arabs of western Sudan. While the Baggara to this day profess their Arab ancestry, their intermixing with indigenous black Africans left them with a colour that betrayed their claims to be regarded as true Arabs. Moreover, the Khalifa needed the support of many ethnic groups whom he rushed to Omdurman to back him against the northern Sudanese people who openly declared themselves as the rightful heirs of the Mahdi who died a few months after the fall

of Khartoum (1885). Not surprisingly, the Khalifa had to pursue a ruthless regime to remain in power. His legendary show of force was displayed every week in Omdurman in what was at the time a residential park that bears the name Alarda, the Display Park, to this day. In his quest to maintain power, the Khalifa committed several atrocities, the most infamous of which was his onslaught on Berber, a northern city which was accused of collaborating with the colonial invaders. The Khalifa has never been forgiven for his excesses, although the Mahdi had emerged almost untainted by all the ills of his state.

The legacy of the Mahdi is inseparable from the present Arab Islamic Project and the construction of Sudanese identity. The Mahdi's credentials rested on two pillars. Firstly, he was a theological scholar with a mission that afterwards earned him sainthood. Secondly, he had 'the right pedigree' connecting him directly with the Prophet Mohammed. While the Mahdi dedicated his short victorious life to discharging his baraka (blessings), it was the Khalifa who oversaw the mundane work of laying the foundation of the new state, the present Sudan. Despite his alleged Arab credentials, the Khalifa was constantly challenged by the so-called Asharaf. Claiming to be related to the Mahdi, the Asharaf saw themselves as a cut above others and the legitimate heirs of the Mahdi. For them, to be dominated by westerners in the guise of the Khalifa and his fellow countrymen was, in short, heretical. Although the Khalifa persevered, he left behind a nation that was nowhere near the melting pot-state that was accommodative of diverse populations. His own courtship of Arab ancestry allowed the slave mentality that equated blackness with slave to prevail. His alienation of the northern ethnic groups paved the way for his overthrow as those groups became the vanguards of the invading Anglo-Egyptian armies (1898).

As I mentioned before, the Khalifa retained the perils of the Mahdist rule, while the Mahdi, being a northerner emerged as a natural hero worshipped to this day in Sudan's history and mythology. Why not? Because he was instrumental in entrenching the current Arab-Islamic monoculture. His fellow northern merchants known as Jallaba (procurers of goods – slaves in the past) were encouraged to retain their slave-trade mentality in return for their financial support of the Mahdist revolution. These Jallaba created a web of trade networks that spanned the whole country but remained allied to their homeland along the River Nile in northern Sudan (hence, Riverain Sudanese). To this day the Jallaba control national trade across the nation and finance northern-based politicians.

The Anglo-Egyptian rule of the Sudan (1898–1956) laid the foundation for modern Sudan but equally for many of its present ills. Western commanders of the Khalifa's army retreated to form the last kingdom of Darfur under Sultan Ali Dinar. For those ethnic groups north of Khartoum, the new era was that of unlimited opportunity. Having lost faith in the Mahdist Regime and its western supporters, they flocked to welcome and fight for their new masters, the colonial invaders. The colonial regime rewarded them by making them their assistants and later their heirs.

In its pursuit of establishing a modern state with a modern civic society, the colonial regime also established regulated markets all over the country. The Jallaba (merchants, procurers of goods) of the northern Sudan were to play an important role in this sphere. Their early flight from excessive tax imposed by the Turkish Regime (1821–1885) had led to their exodus from northern Sudan to the areas far away from the Nile (Beck 1997). This dispersion proved worthwhile during and after the independence of the country. Northern traders in non-northern cities of the Sudan continue to operate as conduits to redirect wealth into the same clans of northern Sudan. These Jallabas monopolise both trade and parastatal agencies for their own enrichment.

The biggest benefit of the colonial regime to the hegemony of northern Sudan was yet to come. Colonialism rested on the monopoly of modernity that underpinned the philosophy of all modern European Empires. Through this monopoly, colonial staff portrayed themselves as of superior standing in terms of rationality, science, order, discipline, etc. Flip the coin and you get the attributes which were associated with the natives. They were to accept their position as superstitious, chaotic, unruly, tribalistic, irrational and barbaric (see Bernal 1997). This construct of social relations ran throughout every colonial institution and was part and parcel of the colonial machinery of legitimacy. With the demise of colonial rule, members of the northern region of the Sudan (three most northern Provinces at the time) simply slotted themselves into the social relations vacuum left by their colonial masters. As colonial heirs, these northern Sudanese assumed the mantle of being the vanguards of modernity in Sudan, complete with its colonial attributes. They were to become the civilised, the rational, the scientific, the orderly, etc. These attributes were central to northern Sudan's claim to legitimacy to rule the country and are part of a discourse that remains alive to this day. Non-northerners who were in the margins of power in the Sudan were portrayed as superstitious, primitive, tribalistic, etc., the same qualities that were once the preserve of all Sudanese nationals.

### Darfur at a crossroads

Since the independence of Sudan in 1956, Sudan has been packaged to both insiders and outsiders as an outright Arab-Islamic country. Throughout its post-independence life, the ruling elite in the Sudan has pursued this project with impeccable rigour, oblivious to its consequences. This Arab-Islamic project proceeded unhindered and survived irrespective of the democratic, socialist, military or religious credentials of the government of the day. What is even more perplexing is that, had the ruling class been fully faithful to this project, Darfur would be facing fewer problems today. Darfur is 100% Muslim, a substantial proportion of the population has credible claim to 'Arab ancestry' and all Black Darfuris use Arabic as a mother tongue or as a lingua franca. There is, however, another agenda behind this project that has taken many marginal Sudanese like the Darfuris several decades to comprehend.



**Camp, Darfur. (Photo credit of Commandant Bernard Markey, Irish Defence Forces)**

The chosen Arab-Islamic identity is not only a symbolic tag. Rather, it is a discourse through which the entire Sudan can be managed and ordered into specific social relations. More lethal than that, it is so elastic and flexible that it can pave, so to speak, different routes that lead to the same station, a 'dead end' one might say. Hence, irrespective of the nature of the government that sits in Khartoum, the social relations seem to remain the same. The marginalized retain their marginality and the ruling elite of the north prevails with its power and privileges intact.

Islam was primarily spread by people of Arab culture. In many ways, it is hard to disentangle Islam from Arab culture. Wherever there are Muslims, the world over, one can observe substantial elements of Arab culture underpinning their Islam. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect some confusion, if not outright interchangeability, between the process of Islamisation and that of Arabisation. The Sudan is certainly not unique in this regard. From North Africa to India to the Far East, many Muslim ethnic groups also claim to be Arabs. Nowhere is this phenomenon clearer than in the Sudan. In the local vernacular, Arabisation and Islamisation are seen as synonymous and interchangeable. For example, circumcision which is seen as Islamic in Sudan is referred to equally as Arabisation (taareeb) or admittance into Sunna, i.e. the prophetic way of life (idkhalhum filsunna; see El-Tom 1998a: 164 and 1998b: 158). This understanding of the dual aspects of being a Muslim has had wide ramifications on ethnicity and its transformation over decades if not centuries in the Sudan.

At present, the Nubians of northern Sudan, like the Danagla, claim to be Arabs and so do the Bija of east Sudan and the Hawazma of Kordofan. In Darfur, many of the current groups that are now classified as Africans and hence dispossessed of their acquired Arab

connections also make similar claims but the situation is changing fast. Some of these groups who profess Arab connections in Darfur still retain their African languages while others have lost theirs to Arabic in the last century or two. Examples of those groups who have lost their own languages are the Zaghawa, the Fur, the Berti, the Slamat and Meidobe, to mention but a few. Claims of these groups to Arab ancestry are often accompanied by written pedigrees codifying their ancestral link with either the Prophet Mohammed or with his close associates. Sometimes, these pedigrees bear authentication stamps bought in Saudi Arabia. Incredible as it may be, there are now commercial offices in Saudi Arabia trading on verification of these pedigrees.

As alluded to earlier, it was not the simple claim to Arab ancestry which elevated Riverain Sudan to its hegemonic position in the country. Rather, it was their opportunistic monopolisation of modernity that was once the preserve of British colonial staff. By appropriating modernity and becoming its overseers in the Sudan, they have succeeded in dislodging many other ethnic groups across the Sudan who can mobilise their claim to Arab ancestry. Nomadic groups like the Kababish, the Ziyadiya, the Rashaida and the Zibaidiya can all profess Arab identity to an extent that cannot be matched by the current hegemonic groups in the country. However, in the current discourse of power, they are classified as essentially backward and at odds with modernity.

### **Why the Janjaweed**

The term Janjaweed, which has now entered international lexicons, is new to most Sudanese including the Darfuris. The term literally means 'hordes' but has also taken

descriptive connotations, hence other translations like 'unruly men on horses', 'Arab Militias', 'jinn on horses' or even 'horsemen brandishing JIM 3 machine guns' (Jawad = horse). The term became popular in the mid 1980s following assaults by Arab militias in west Darfur.

The formation of the Janjaweed was neither spontaneous nor accidental. Rather it was the result of planned actions by successive Khartoum governments. Ironically, if the Janjaweed were to look for a god-father in the apex of power in Khartoum, they can find that in the guise of none other than Sadiq Almahdi, reputed to have led the most flourishing democracy in post-independent Sudan (1986–1989). It was Sadiq Almahdi, the grandson of the Mahdi, who signalled to the Arab groups that expanding their power base could go hand-in-hand with the national ideal of promoting Arab-Islamic culture; that they could massacre thousands and thousands in their search for new wealth and in an ethnic cleansing fashion without facing the law; and that their leaders could maintain respectability and associate freely with the ruling elite.

At a different level, the predominantly Christian south/Southern Region of Sudan has been fighting Khartoum government representing the rest of the country, collectively referred to as 'north' for several decades (1955–2005). The term 'north' here is not confined to the area north of Khartoum as has been used in the rest of this article. With the accession of John Garang to power in the south in 1983, the fortunes of the Sudanese army started to wane. Having lost faith in successive Khartoum governments, the marginalized areas in the country were no longer providing fresh recruits to the army. With extreme foolishness, the government turned to Arab groups to use as instruments in its war against the south. The Arab groups obliged in return for provision of arms and protection from the law. Thus in 1987 the government of Sadiq Almahdi armed the Baggara Arabs of south Kordofan to provide a buffer zone against the rebels in the south. Enslavement, burning of villages and cattle grabbing became the order of the day. Under protection of the state, the Arabs prospered at the expense of the innocent ethnic groups that were deemed to be affiliated to the SPLA (Sudanese People's Liberation Army of the south).

But the power base of the Arabs did not stop at the gate of the Southern Region. Darfur too saw orchestrated attacks on the Fur and the Masaaleit in an organised fashion. Africa Watch narrates how these attacks were preceded by a warning a day ahead by the Nomads to the Black farmers ordering them to vacate their villages. The war cry of Janjaweed is frightening but explicit: 'whoever dies goes into martyrdom and whoever survives gets the wealth of the slaves' (al mat shaheed, wal hia yahil leeho mal al aheed; Africa Watch 1990, Sulaiman 1994: 26, Abdulrahman 2005).

There can be no doubt that the atrocities of the Janjaweed proceeded with the blessings of Khartoum governments, past and present. In 1987, Sadiq Almahdi met with what was called

'the Arab Congregation'. Their intention was – and still is – to create 'an Arab balance' in Darfur favourable for Khartoum and its policy of mono Arab-Islamic culture. The aim of the Arab Congregation was spelt out very clearly in clandestine pamphlets issued in mid 1980s. Released in two parts under the title Quraish 1 and Quraish 2, the pamphlets call for creating what is referred to as 'an Arab Belt' spanning from central Sudan to the borders of Chad. The process involves removing all those who are classified as non-Arabs from this zone. The term 'Quraish' is rich in Arab-Islamic symbolism and connotes the ethnic group of nobody other than the Prophet Mohammed himself. The Arab Congregation is still active, with branches in most Darfur towns and has been vocal in several local elections even during Albashir's government (1989 to date).

The free rein given to the Arabs to pillage, massacre, rape and enslave those who were not fortunate enough to fit into the Khartoum racists' project was chillingly demonstrated in Al-Diein city, Darfur, during Sadiq Almahdi's highly-praised democracy (1986–1989). The Baggara massacred their once neighbours and workers in a holocaust-style slaughter. 1,000 were murdered, some burnt alive near a police station and 1,000 survivors were taken slaves. The courageous writers (Baldo and Ushari) who exposed this to the public were castigated by Khartoum scholars for defects in their research methodology. The government of Sadiq Almahdi remained faithful to its Arab allies. As Hashim put it in his breathtaking article: 'If you want to kill out a case – in Sudan – form a committee of investigation for it'; and that is what the Prime Minister did. We are still waiting for the investigation report (Hashim 2004:29). And if Almahdi were to look for anything comforting in his response to that massacre, let me remind him of his government's participation in the mass burial of the



(Photo credit of Commandant Bernard Markey, Irish Defence Forces)

victims. But that too was instigated by uncomfortable motives; for Al-Diein's people including the killers had to be spared the sight of rotten, mutilated and charred bodies around them and the imminent outbreak of disease in the city.

The collaboration of the Janjaweed has taken a much more lethal turn in the life of the present government. Their leaders are now promoted to the highest Government positions in Dafur ranging from heads of security to state governors. The convergence of the Khartoum government with the Janjaweed is now so bizarre that one of the Janjaweed leaders is now among the government delegation to the UN/African Union Peace Negotiations on the Darfur Crisis.

What is obscene about the government's use of the Arab militia is that it has demonstrated its failure from day one. Yet the Arab militia continue to be mobilised. In 1987, the Arab militia proved to be no match for the SPLA against whom they were launched in the first place. Instead, they redirected their lethal weapons against the innocent and clearly unarmed civilians with stunning brutality. They obliterated thousands of villages in the Abye area in south Kordofan Region while carefully avoiding any contact with the SPLA.

The same chilling story is now repeated in Darfur. Neither the militia, now called Janjaweed, nor the army can confront the so-called rebels in Darfur. Rather, the Janjaweed war, backed by heavy aerial bombardment, is mainly waged against innocent civilians.

### Summary and Update

This article depicts the background to the current conflict in Darfur. The result of Khartoum's Arab-Islamic project is a brutal war between the so-called rebels of Darfur fighting the government and its Arab militia. The past few months have witnessed signing of peace protocols on Ceasefire, Humanitarian Assistance to Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Declaration of Principles (DoP). The Seventh Round of Talks ended with the so-called Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) ratified by Sudan Government and a faction of the SLM led by Minni Arko Minnawi. A few weeks later, rebels opposed to the DPA launched a new anti-Agreement coalition under the name "The National Redemption Front" (NRF). Their first major strike against the Government forces was in early July 2006.

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