

**Prepared Remarks for Press Briefing:
Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan Toby Harward**

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Briefing from N'Djamena, Chad

The UN just concluded a two-week mission on the ground inside Darfur. The mission was for two purposes:

1. We were carrying out a recce for UN common premises to reestablish a firm and permanent foothold on the ground, which will allow the UN to work more consistently with NGOs, reinforce their work, and add the necessary scale and volume needed to respond to the desperate humanitarian situation, insofar as our funding, supplies and access will allow.
2. We were meeting with local *de facto* authorities on the ground in Central and West Darfur – namely with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudan Liberation Army / Abdul Wahid al Nur (SLA-AW) faction – to ensure their cooperation with humanitarian activities; meeting with NGOs to examine enhanced coordination and engagement; and meeting with internally displaced people and other community leaders, and vulnerable populations to better ascertain their situation.

In accordance with the requirements of the Sudanese Government, the UN team entered through the Tine border crossing into North Darfur, which is controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and their allies.

We traveled into West Darfur and Central Darfur and spent most of our time in Zalingei and the Jebel Marra region. Tine is the only border crossing from Chad that the Sudanese Government will permit us to use, both for personnel missions and for the entry of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance. Currently, systematic truck movements across the border are restricted by rainwater in the border *wadi*, which usually necessitates a wait of 48 to 72 hours while the water recedes after heavy storms.

In terms of what we found on the ground, we visited multiple camps for internally displaced people and gathering sites in Zalingei and Jebel Marra and met with displaced people from across Sudan – not just from Al Fasher, but also from Nyala, El Geneina, Khartoum and other regions and cities, including from as far away as Sennar.

We are not clear on figures of internally displaced people, but the latest statistics from the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix has at least 300,000

people fleeing Al Fasher in the last several months, many of whom have fled to safer areas under the control of the SLA-AW in the Jebel Marra region and surrounding areas.

In addition, there are internally displaced people from earlier battles in the current war, and internally displaced people from previous wars, including the conflict from 2003 to 2005. SLA-AW interlocutors estimate there are several million internally displaced people on territory under the control of its forces. While we cannot confirm these figures, there are certainly hundreds of thousands of recent and longer-term internally displaced people in the Jebel Marra region. The situation is desperate.

Camp leaders in Zalingei informed the UN team that some internally displaced people survive on tree leaves, grain husks, and ground nut remnants.

I visited a girls' secondary school housing more than 2,000 internally displaced people, many of whom are living in grass shacks that are inundated with water and completely waterlogged.

Internally displaced people are pleading with humanitarian actors for essential shelter items like plastic sheeting, floor mats, blankets and mosquito nets – as well as food, nutrition and medical supplies.

In Golo, 70 internally displaced people are living in one school classroom, and of course, all classrooms in Golo are full of internally displaced people. Children's schooling stopped a long time ago.

In Rokero, we met thousands of people newly displaced from Al Fasher who were being registered under flimsy coverings, which were being blown away by the wind and rain. We met 77 children admitted during the last week into the Médecins Sans Frontières-supported hospital there who were suffering from "malnutrition with medical complications." The number of admittances increases every week. These children are the lucky ones. Others don't make it to the hospitals. Reports of deaths among children and other vulnerable people are increasing.

We also encountered some better news. Many people who have been internally displaced said they feel safe in areas controlled by SLA-AW – and that host communities regularly give them food, although their own stocks are rapidly dwindling.

Many internally displaced people and host communities are out in the fields planting crops. They feel safe to do so across Jebel Marra, and in some areas of Central and West Darfur controlled by the RSF.

A recent agreement between RSF, SLA-AW and local autonomous Arab militia commanders has led to increased levels of safety along a critical access road between Zalingei and Nertiti, and we saw significant agricultural activity when we returned last week. If the rains continue, we hope for a successful harvest, which will – as predicted by the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) snapshot – reduce the numbers of people living under IPC Phase 4 and IPC Phase 5 conditions, the highest levels of acute food insecurity.

However, the number of internally displaced and other vulnerable people is increasing every day as long as this war continues. Many more innocent people are going to die from malnutrition and

other preventable diseases unless the UN and humanitarian partners can considerably scale up assistance inside areas classified as IPC Phase 4 and IPC Phase 5.

Despite restricted access across the Tine border crossing, the UN has been able to move more than 320 trucks into Darfur from Chad in the last weeks, a large majority of which have been able to reach their destinations in IPC Phase 4 and IPC Phase 5 areas.

However, the UN urgently needs increased access if we are to respond with the scale and volume necessary to address the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Most importantly, we need the Adre border crossing open, as this would significantly quicken and simplify our access routes.

In addition, we need the *de facto* authorities on the ground to do everything possible to ensure command and control of their forces, and affiliated militias to prevent looting, taxation and diversion of the trucks.

All those controlling territory have a humanitarian obligation of ensuring that humanitarian assistance is able to reach vulnerable populations quickly and efficiently.