

Teacher information sheet

Genocide in Darfur



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Darfur is a region in the west of Sudan, bordering Chad, in north-east Africa. Before the conflict Darfur had an ethnically mixed population of around six million black Africans and Arabs.

Darfur's history

Historically Darfur's many different ethnic groups lived peacefully alongside each other, although conflicts over land-use between the black African sedentary farmers and the lighter-skinned nomadic Arab population have arisen over time.



Flag of Sudan, adopted in 1970

The Sudanese Government has been condemned as racist – favouring Arabs over black Africans. They are accused of being complicit in 'ethnic cleansing' and enslavement of black Africans. Darfur's ethnic mix of black Africans and Arabs made it a target for the Sudanese government.



Many Sudanese people believe that the country's border areas, such as Darfur (highlighted in green), have been neglected and marginalised by the government. Development has been focused on the capital city of Khartoum and the centre of the country.

In February 2003 two Darfuri rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), launched a rebellion against the government. The majority of the rebels came from black African farming tribes, who accused the government of oppressing Darfur's non-Arab citizens. The government responded by training, arming and mobilising the Arab-militia, known as the *Janjaweed* ('devils on horseback'), to stop the rebellion, causing a civil war.

The genocide

The civil war has continued in the region since 2003. The Sudanese Government has supported the *Janjaweed*. Their violence has caused a humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur that has been condemned as genocide. Thousands of villages have been destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people killed, and millions forced to flee their homes.



Um Zeifa burning village © Brian Steidle

Refugees from Darfur say that after Government-ordered air raids on villages, the *Janjaweed* ride into villages, slaughter the men and rape the women, before stealing whatever they can.

Between 200,000 and 400,000 civilians have been killed, although estimates vary greatly, and this figure could be much higher. Up to 2.6 million people are still displaced in Darfur. They have been forced to flee their homes to makeshift refugee camps in Darfur or Chad run by international aid agencies.

International support

An African Union force of 7,000 troops was deployed in 2004 but was understaffed and did not originally have the mandate to intervene to prevent atrocities – just to monitor them.

In 2007 the UN upgraded the international military presence in Darfur by creating the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Their mandate is to protect civilians and deliver humanitarian aid.

In July 2011, the Sudanese government and JEM, one of the rebel groups, signed the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. This included agreements for wealth sharing, compensation for Darfuri survivors, a ceasefire agreement, release of JEM prisoners and recognition of JEM as a political party. UNAMID was tasked with administering this agreement on the ground. However, violence in Darfur has continued since this agreement was signed.

Justice

In 2009, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for the arrest of the President of Sudan, Omar Al Bashir, on charges of Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes in Darfur. A second round of indictments with three counts of genocide was issued on 12 July 2010. Al-Bashir remains in power and continues to resist arrest.

Darfur today

Violence continues in Darfur to this day.

In the lead up to South Sudan's independence in 2011, fighting broke out between the Sudanese Government and rebel groups in the border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Reports have been made that government forces are attacking civilians in these border regions and the Nuba Mountains, based on racial and religious identity. They are reportedly using the same 'scorched earth' policies as were used in Darfur. It is difficult to get information about the scale of these atrocities, as humanitarian and media organisations are not allowed within Sudan's borders. However, they shed light on Sudan's ongoing human rights abuses.

Despite a previous commitment to disarm the *Janjaweed* militia, in 2014 the Sudanese Government have incorporated them into the Sudanese Armed Forces, renamed as the 'Rapid Support Forces' and continue to deploy them in ongoing conflicts.

Find out more...

Genocide in Darfur: hmd.org.uk/darfur

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