

## SKBNCU Flash update

15 September 2015

### Abuses against civilians continue in Government held areas in Blue Nile

Sudanese citizens living in the Government held areas in Blue Nile are victims of continue abuses by government forces and militias. The people who safely reached the refugee camps in South Sudan and SPLM/A-N held areas in Blue Nile, have reported appalling human rights abuses and dire humanitarian conditions within the Government held areas in Baw, northern Kurmuk and southern Geissan counties. People have limited freedom to cultivate, schools are closed and clinics are not available. Burning of villages intensified in 2015, forcing people to flee their areas for safety. According to those interviewed, villages were burned to force people out of their home areas and to reduce support for the SPLM/A-N. People lost all their belongings and livestock, while an unverified number of women were raped.

In the first week of September 2015, 19 Households (HHs) with 99 people, arrived from the village of Maganza Moraik (Baw county) into the SPLM/A-N controlled areas at the border with South Sudan. The newcomers were interviewed by local humanitarian actors. Their village was burned down by government militias and they were forced to run away. The group spent four days walking in the bushes, eating roots and wild fruits. Several cases of malnutrition were reported, and the community said that four children died as the walked to SPLM/A-N controlled areas. Two women interviewed disclosed several cases of rape that happened while the militias were looting the village, but number of rapes could not be verified. Women are still frightened and reluctant to talk.

A group of 58 HHs, Ingessana, arrived in Kaya refugee camp in late July 2015. Local and international humanitarian monitors conducted interviews with them in mid-August. The community left the village of Maganza Fadimia on 12 May while the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) came from Damazin on 18 mounted vehicles to attack the village and set their homes on fire. The attack lasted from 17:00 to 21:00. They villagers were forced to leave by the militias, abandon their cattle and belongings, while some men were taken away in one Landcruiser. Witnesses reported that militias shouted at them, "We will come back here tomorrow. And, if we find you, we will kill you." Several militia men repeated, "We do not care about you. If you want to fly away, you fly away. If you want to go under the earth, you go." A man who tried to react during the attack was pushed into the fire, causing his face and body to be burned and then he was taken away. His family does not know his whereabouts. A few women were raped by the RSF, some in front of their husbands (numbers could not be verified). Some of the villagers headed north causing families to be separated. One man lost his wife and daughter, while another couple had to leave their daughter of seven years with her grandmother. Their whereabouts are unknown. According to the community, the villages were burned to punish the people for their alleged support to the rebellion (through their family members) and the government wants to clear this area.

The community reported that living conditions in the government held area ahead of the attacks were extremely dire. Since the war started in 2011, insecurity has been high causing people to fear leaving the village and the government did not allow the villagers to plant causing food scarcity. Some of the people randomly received 1 malwa (3 kg) per HHs per week from government humanitarian agencies (normally, 1 malwa lasts 1 day per HH). Livelihood opportunities were very limited, with the community having difficulty reaching markets and the inability to collect charcoal or cultivate due to insecurity. Only a few of the community had livestock. There was no school in the area. During peace time, the closest school was three to four hours walking distance causing the majority of the children in the community to never attend school. People wanted to escape these abysmal living conditions before but roads were blocked by SAF.

Occasionally, government military forces would come and arrest people without ID, take them to military barracks and torture them (the majority of the new arrivals either lost their IDs in the fire or never had them due to the high cost - 80SDG per ID). Young boys were forcibly recruited, causing families to try to hide the young boys in bushes as cars approached the village. According to the community, at least 200 people from the area had been taken to Damazin and arrested and tortured since January 2015 by the military intelligence. A 25-year-old man spent six

months and twelve days in prison in Damazin. He was tortured several times. He and other prisoners were forced to walk and crawl on the fire (domestic and International monitors saw burn scars on the man's body). They were beaten, and cut with a sword. They were accused of supporting the SPLM/A-N. People's perception is also that they were punished because they were considered 'black'. The man managed to escape and reach his home only to find the village had been burned. He then managed to reunite with his community in the SPLM/A-N controlled areas. He said that many more people remain in prison.

Little is known of the remaining prisoners and communities forcibly relocated to IDP camps within the government held areas and around the capital Damazin. While the CU has no access to those areas, it continues to advocate an urgent needs assessment given reports of appalling human rights abuses and dire humanitarian conditions. More pressure on the Government of Sudan by donor governments and humanitarian agencies should be exerted, to ensure that affected communities can receive the assistance they are entitled to under humanitarian law. An independent investigation on the human rights violations should also be conducted.