



Major Government Offensive in Jebel Marra

In SUDO (UK)'s November update monitors warned on the 4th November that the Government of Sudan was preparing for what appeared to be a major offensive in the East Jebel Marra region. This build up of ground troops and military hardware – including technical vehicles, heavy artillery and tanks – was complimented by an increase in militia activity throughout the month of December around the East Jebel Marra region – as will be reported in a soon to be released SUDO (UK) report on human rights abuses throughout Sudan in December 2015.

On the 15th January the Sudanese Government launched an attack on Jebel Marra across five fronts originating from the north east, the north west, the west, the south west and the south.

The offensive began with intensive aerial bombardments from the Sudanese Air Force utilising Antonov transport planes, MiG fighter jets and helicopters, in addition to heavy artillery and rocket fire from ground troops. Monitors report the wide use of barrel bombs in such bombardments. They further note that the attacks were intentionally focussed away from villages inhabited by recent settlers, and were instead focussed primarily on densely populated villages that had previously escaped relatively unscathed from prior military assaults. These include villages such as Kaawool, Saboon Al-Faqr, Kalooketing, Jumaizah Kamrah, Naama and Daaryaah to name but a few. In one instance a bomb was reportedly dropped within 1/2km of a UNAMID base. Such was the ferocity of the aerial assault that civilians could hear the explosions from areas as far as Kass, Malam and Zalingei.

Aerial bombardments were followed by a ground strike led by tanks and other armoured vehicles. Following which other ground forces comprising of troops from units including the Rapid Support Forces and the Border Guards - in addition to various Janjaweed militias - surged forward aboard a large number of 4x4 vehicles, motorcycles, camels, and horses, in an attempt to dislodge the armed opposition. During the initial stages of the offensive monitors noted the destruction of at least 47¹

¹ Saboon Al-Faqr, Fanka Al-Gareyah, Karlang Baang, Deelu, Barko, Sheelu, Maara, Kalinger, Daabah Naayrah, Toory, Kamia, Koolu, Balding, Koraj Lay, Naama, Karteeng, Kootii, Raaya,

villages and the resulting effects concerning vast levels of civilian displacement. Those that have been displaced have sought to travel to other locations including Kabkabeyia, Tawila and Nertiti; however, many civilians were and continue to be unable to do so and have fled further into the mountainous region where they remain in a state of siege devoid of much needed humanitarian assistance.

Continued fighting and ongoing aerial bombardments continue to make life difficult for civilians. Monitors report the ongoing harassment of civilians fleeing to IDP camps (some cases of which are documented below) including high levels of sexual violence, looting, abductions and killings. Monitors further note of great significance the lack of action on the part of UNAMID and local authorities, which are failing in their duty and obligations to protect civilians fleeing the conflict. Insecurity continues to dominate the region with Nertiti acting as a microcosm of the general lack of law and order following the initial offensive.

The photos below were taken on the 23rd January and exhibit the arrival of displaced persons to Rwanda IDP Camp situated near Tawila. On this day 47 children arrived without their parents to the camp in desperate need of food and water. The following day the estimated number of displaced households from Jebel Marra numbered some 520, whilst there was said to be no less than 2,000 families still stranded in areas of Tibra and Masla that are unable to complete the journey to Tawila as a result of numerous Janjaweed militias reportedly roaming between Jebel Marra and Tawila attacking displaced persons who are seeking refuge and much needed humanitarian assistance.



The situation on the ground in Jebel Marra has made it exceptionally difficult for monitors to track the fortunes of both the offensive and the defensive warring parties. The armed opposition on their part have stated that they have successfully repulsed the offensive, whilst the Government of Sudan claims to have cleared the Jebel Marra region of opposition forces. SUDO (UK) is not in a position to be able to offer an authoritative statement on the matter other than it appears that the Government of Sudan has inflicted a number of defeats for the opposition movements and have

Bardaani, Qadu, Baary, Roofa, Todnteka, Kaara, Fijli, Tooringa, Shaawa, Teema, Dalu, Sheikh Mukhtaar Religious School, Karoofla, Koori, Killnga, Kalool, Katrum, Tolong, Kalunkra, Teemi, Teebi, Karara, Kalay, Kinda, Kaybi, Aleeba, Katoorm, Taawra, and Kaalokiting.

gained strategic positions as a result of the offensive. Elements of the offensive are still ongoing and the situation on the ground remains in a constant state of flux.

Copied below are just some incidents of human rights abuses recorded by monitors to exhibit the continuing insecurity afforded to civilians in the region.

14/01/16

Three members of the Rapid Support Forces raped a woman alternately for a period lasting five hours in the village of Katoor. The victim is a widow and a mother of three.

15/01/16

Four members of a Janjaweed militia, dressed in military uniform on camel back, attacked and raped two young women in an incident that lasted for four hours. The young women, aged 18 and 19, had left their homes in the village of Babnoos situated to the north west of Faredah in order to gather firewood.

15/01/16

Members of the Rapid Support Forces abducted Sheikh Mubarak Abd Al-Rasool from his farm in the Bargo region. The perpetrators are demanding ransom for his release.

15/01/16

The Sudanese Air Force killed two children in an indiscriminate attack utilising an Antonov transport plane over the area of Al-Aradeeb Al-Asharah, which also decimated large tracts of farmland.

The two children have been identified as:

1. Yousif Hussain
2. Hawwah Hussain

15/01/16

Janjaweed militiamen numbering 10, dressed in military uniform riding on the back of camels, attacked and killed a local farmer by the name of Omer Saalih near Borah village situated 2km south east of Tabit.

The victim was killed for refusing the militiamen's livestock access to his farm.

15/01/16

On this day a militia looted the village of Kutrum in East Jebel Marra as a consequence for inhabitants' alleged role in the killing of nine camels. Consequently the militia looted the equivalent of SDG 220,000 as restitution. In addition to looting the militia raped two women from the village.

Two days later relentless aerial bombardments and artillery fire had forced the majority of the residents to flee. Whilst doing so a militia pursued the women of the village and perpetrated acts of sexual violence on those it caught.

21/01/16

On this date continued aerial bombardments killed 48 women and destroyed six houses as Antonov transport planes dropped barrel bombs over the villages of Toory, Kinda and Taimi. The women had assembled together in order to flee the villages when an Antonov flew overhead and dropped three bombs killing those present.

21/01/16

Members of a Janjaweed militia attacked a boy whilst he was herding goats in the Omda Quarter of Nertiti. Mustafa Omer Yousif was shot and his livestock looted by the militia that was then later accused of raping five girls. Monitors state that there is currently no law and order in Nertiti and that human rights abuses continue to be perpetrated against unarmed civilians by the various militias.

21/01/16

Government militias – dressed in military uniform and riding on the backs of camels and horses – set out from the suburbs of Nertiti and attacked three villages in Western Jebel Marra. The villages of Barko, Tame and Teemo were looted and their residents displaced toward the IDP camp north of Nertiti.

21/01/16

Members of a pro-Government militia numbering some 50 persons attacked a group of over 100 women during which they abducted and raped 11 of them.

More than 100 women had assembled with their children in the area around Kotoor and Killinga in order to head together towards Nertiti. When they were roughly 2km outside of Nertiti they were attacked by the 50 militiamen. The 11 women who were caught were raped multiple times for a period spanning as much as six hours.

SUDO (UK) calls for an urgent cessation of hostilities in order for civilians to be able to leave the region and for the provision of humanitarian assistance for those affected.

Recommendations

To the Government of Sudan:

- Immediately cease all military activity in the vicinity of the Jebel Marra Mountain targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure – including acts of aerial bombardment.
- Immediately liaise with all parties in order to facilitate the entry of humanitarian actors to assess and respond to the catastrophic humanitarian situation, in addition to enable the safe passage of civilians.
- Protect civilians by establishing law and order in order to enable a safe transit for civilians who wish to flee the conflict zones and to seek relative safety.
- Conduct transparent and independent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses committed during the offensive.
- Engage all stakeholders in Darfur, including civil society, IDPs and the hold out opposition forces, to pursue a comprehensive peace agreement for the benefit of the civilians.

To the Hold out Armed Opposition:

- Immediately cease all military activity targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- Immediately liaise with all parties in order to facilitate the entry of humanitarian actors to assess and respond to the catastrophic humanitarian situation, in addition to enable the safe passage of civilians.
- Work alongside the Government of Sudan and all other actors in Darfur to put an end to the variety of conflicts currently taking place throughout the region in order to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement that is owned by all stakeholders in Darfur.

To UNAMID and the International Community:

- Immediately work with the warring parties to cease all military activity in the vicinity of Jebel Marra and liaise with the parties to facilitate the entry of humanitarian actors to assess and respond to the catastrophic humanitarian situation, in addition to enable the safe passage of civilians.
- Take action to fulfil its mandate to “contribute to the protection of civilian populations under imminent threat of physical violence and prevent attacks against civilians, within its capability and areas of deployment, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of the Sudan”.