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Photo Essay: The Crisis in Darfur

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Photo Essay: The Crisis in Darfur*

Olivier Bercault

Abstract

This is a photo essay about the internal conflict in Darfur, one of the world's poorest and most inaccessible regions, on Sudan's western border with Chad.

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PHOTO ESSAY: THE CRISIS IN DARFUR

*Olivier Bercault**

Introduction

The government of Sudan is responsible for “ethnic cleansing” and crimes against humanity in the context of an internal conflict in Darfur, one of the world’s poorest and most inaccessible regions, on Sudan’s western border with Chad. Since February 2003 and under the pretext of suppressing a rebellion, the Sudanese government and its proxy armed militias known as Janjaweed have committed numerous attacks on the civilian populations of the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa and other ethnic groups perceived to support the rebel insurgency.

The same ethnic Janjaweed militias operating in Sudan have since exported the Darfur violence into Chad with the help of allied local groups. They attacked Chadian villagers, seizing livestock, killing civilians, displacing thousands of people, and threatening the twelve Darfurian refugee camps located in eastern Chad.

Since the Darfur crisis began in 2003, Human Rights Watch has dispatched numerous teams of investigators to the region and documented massacres, summary executions of civilians—including women and children—acts of sexual violence, the bombing and burning of towns and villages, the destruction of water sources and food stocks, and the forced displacement of an estimated 2.4 million people, including 200,000 refugees who went to neighboring Chad. As many as 200,000 people may have died during the conflict from violence, disease and other conditions related to forced displacement and insufficient access to

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humanitarian assistance according to United Nations (“U.N.”) figures.

At the early stage of the crisis, the two main rebel groups in Darfur—the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (“SLA/M”) and the Justice and Equality Movement (“JEM”)—claimed that they were seeking redress of decades of grievances over perceived political marginalization, socio-economic neglect, and discrimination.

Today, the situation in Darfur is transforming from a highly destructive armed conflict between these two rebel groups and the government into a violent scramble for power and resources involving government forces, its Janjaweed allies, various rebel and former rebel factions, and bandits.

About Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch, one of the world’s most influential human rights organizations, conducts timely and accurate investigations, makes thoughtful and informed policy recommendations, and generates intense public pressure to confront human rights abusers and defend basic freedoms. Our experienced staff of regional and legal experts conducts on-site investigations and engage in aggressive outreach through high-level policy advocacy. We have earned a reputation as a leading human rights defender because of our ability to respond quickly and effectively to a broad spectrum of human rights concerns—from discrimination to genocide. We bring international attention to the exploitation of children; the mistreatment of women; and the failure of governments to ensure the safety of refugees, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable populations. Through vigilant monitoring and advocacy, Human Rights Watch is advancing the protection of human rights in over seventy countries.



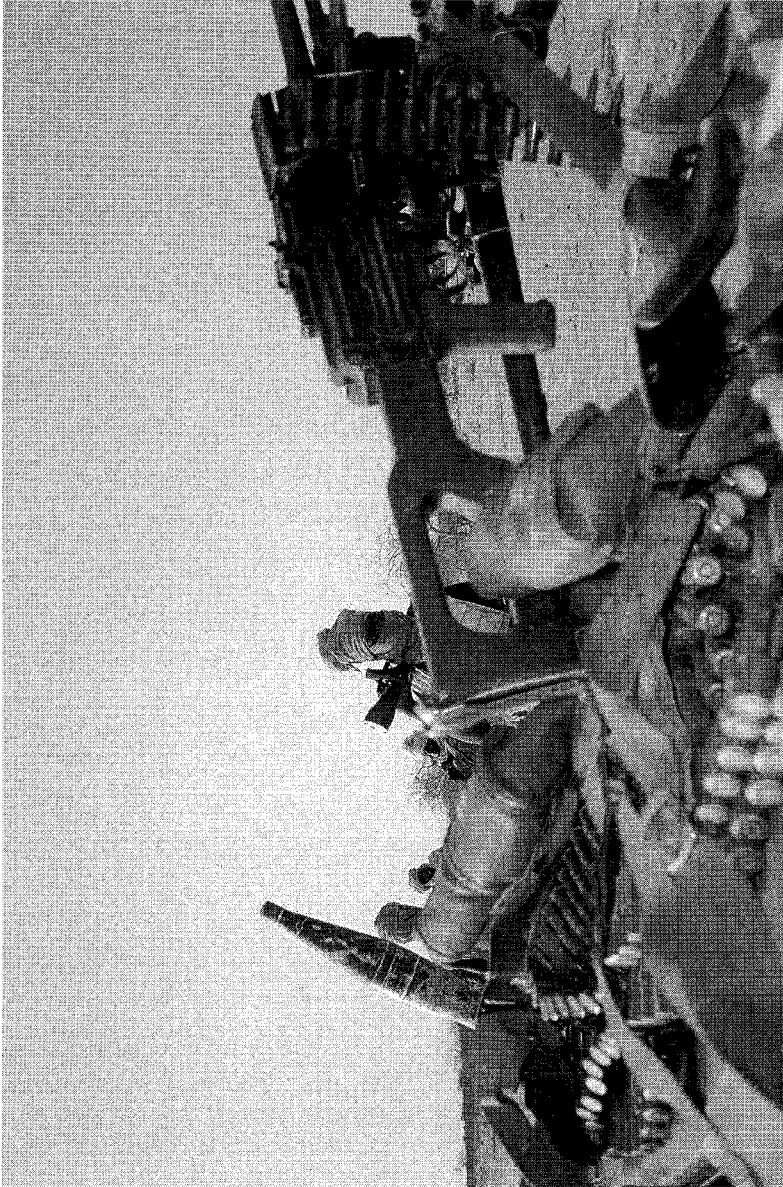
(c) 2004 Olivier Bercault / Human Rights Watch
Hangala hamlet, part of Furawiya in North Darfur, was bombed and destroyed by the Sudanese army and the Janjaweed militias in 2004. It has been abandoned by its inhabitants who fled to Chad.



(c) 2004 Olivier Bercault / Human Rights Watch
Three of twelve half-decomposed bodies of civilians found by Human Rights Watch researchers on July 24, 2004 near Furawiya, north Darfur. According to witnesses, these civilians were captured and executed by soldiers of the Sudanese army during the attack on Furawiya in April 2004.



(c) 2004 Olivier Bercault / Human Rights Watch
Sudanese Liberation Army ("SLA") rebels near Saya in North Darfur, August 2004.



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SLA rebels near Tabit in North Darfur, July 2005.



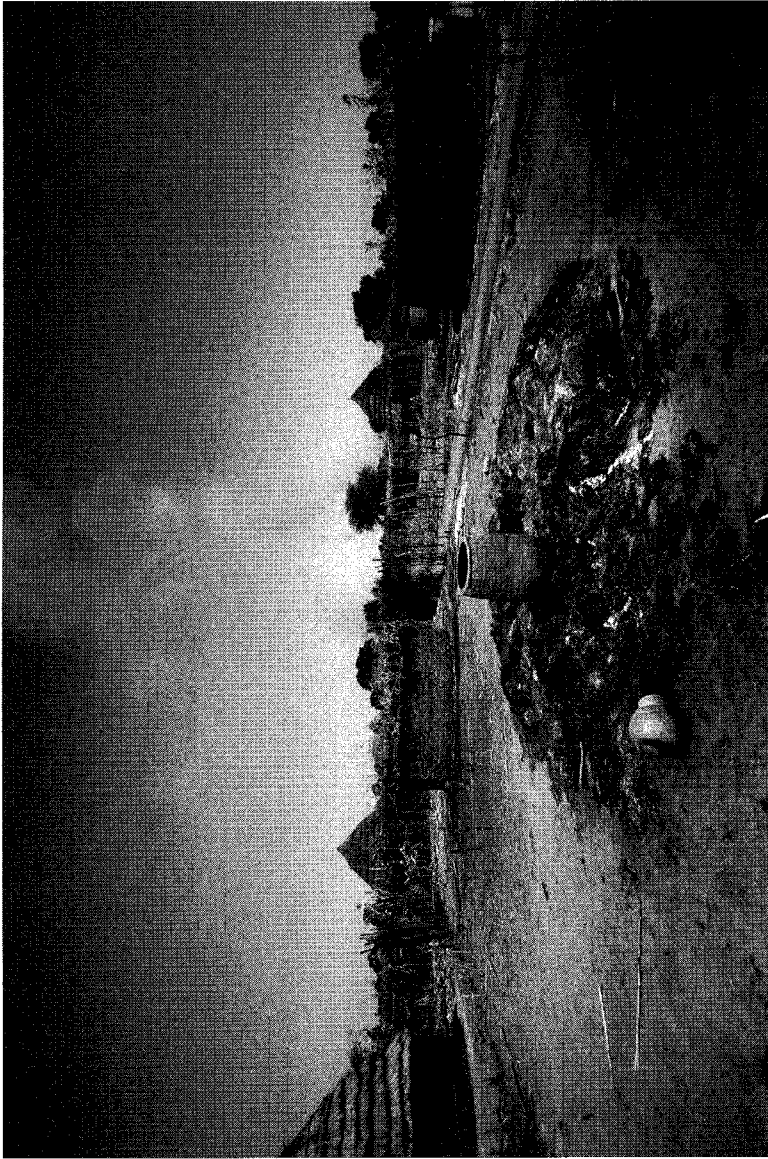
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Farchana refugee camp in eastern Chad on February 17, 2005. More than 18,000 refugees from Darfur were still in the camp at the beginning of 2007 according to the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees.



(c) 2006 Tim Hetherington on assignment for Human Rights Watch

Sudanese refugees who fled the conflict in Darfur gather at a well in Chad.



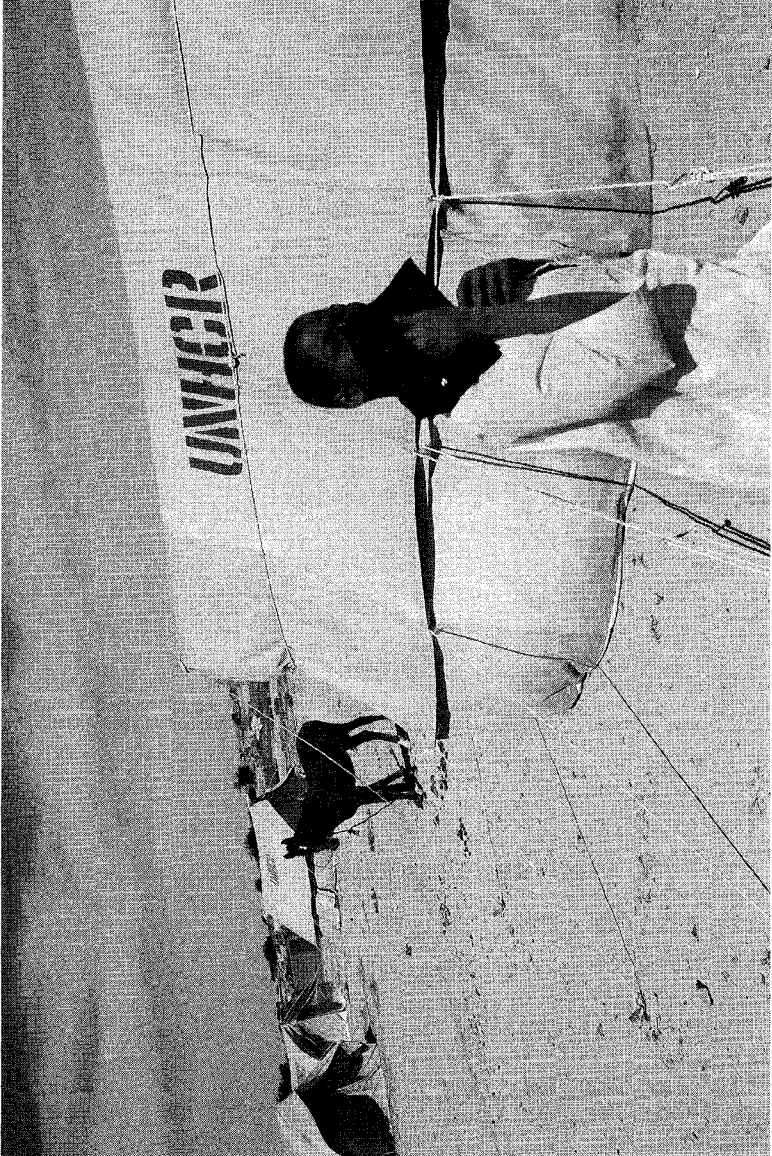
(c) 2006 Kadir van Lohuizen / Noor on assignment for Human Rights Watch
Djorlo in eastern Chad was attacked by Chadian Arab militia on November 8, 2006. The militia burned huts and destroyed harvest storage areas. Another village, attacked on November 12, 2006, can be seen burning in the background.



(c) 2006 Tim Hetherington on assignment for Human Rights Watch
The outline of a body in the village of Jowara, which was attacked by Sudanese and Chadian Arab militia during a series of raids in April 2006.



(c) 2006 Kadir van Lohuizen / Noor on assignment for Human Rights Watch
A wounded woman is led to shelter. Chadian militia groups have attacked dozens of villages in southeastern Chad in November 2006, killing several hundred civilians, injuring scores more and driving at least 10,000 people from their homes.



(c) 2006 Kadir van Lohuizen / Noor on assignment for Human Rights Watch
Sudanese refugees in Kounoungo refugee camp in eastern Chad. The camp is outside Guereda, a town near the border with Darfur. These refugees, displaced by the war in Darfur, had been living on the border between Chad and Sudan since 2003, but were forced to flee again because of the fighting in the fall of 2006 in Chad.