

## East Sudan

### 1. Background

**1.1** Sudan has a population of 44 million people, containing a diversity of ethnic and linguistic tribal groups.<sup>1</sup> The state, both before and after gaining independence from the British Empire in 1956, has been subject to prolonged intra-state conflict between the Central Government in Khartoum and various minorities, as well as inter-tribal warfare: the most internationally recognised of these struggles have been the Southern Sudanese fight for independence, and the Darfur crisis. However, one of the ten most underreported areas in the world, according to a UN survey, is Eastern Sudan.<sup>2</sup>

**1.2** Eastern Sudan includes the states of Red Sea, Kassala and Al-Qadarif as well as Port Sudan located on the Red Sea, the Sudan's main export/import hub for its oil. East Sudan is a resource rich region that includes gas, gold and other mineral deposits, as well as the potential for agricultural and livestock farming.<sup>3</sup> The largest minority in the region are the Beja, who share the name with their language, and constitute around six percent of the country's entire population. The Beja are indigenous to North Sudan, as well as parts of Eritrea and Egypt, and claim a six thousand year association with the region. A term which encompasses many tribes or clans including Bisharin, Hedareb, Hadendowa, Amara and Beni-Amer, they are Muslim, but ethnically African, not Arab, following minority Sufi religious traditions rather than Sunni, which is the preferred branch of Islam of the central government.

**1.3** Decades of drought, along with the general economic and political marginalisation of the region have resulted in high levels of 'chronic poverty' among the Beja in Eastern Sudan.<sup>4</sup> The region has rich petrol and gold reserves, with 8 tonnes of gold being extracted every year (worth \$60 billion) all of which goes to Khartoum. In April 2011 the Red Sea state was hit by drought, leading to famine in the region, where 12% of the country's total population reside.<sup>5</sup> Many have been forced to move to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps to meet basic food needs. In addition, the country's borders with Eritrea and Ethiopia have experienced sporadic influxes of refugees fleeing from famine or political and social unrest in the past two decades, further aggravating the region's internal economic problems.

**1.4** 'The region suffers from a chronic lack of reliable data' and therefore obtaining accurate and up to date information about East Sudan and the Beja people is extremely difficult and further hinders international awareness of their situation.<sup>6</sup> The Beja, being an indigenous minority, have historically been sidelined by whatever regime has been in power. However, in 1958 they created the Beja Congress Party: a coalition of educated professionals and notables to represent their community at a national

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators 2010, [http://www.google.co.uk/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9\\_&met\\_y=sp\\_pop\\_totl&idim=country:SDN&dl=en&hl=en&q=sudan+population](http://www.google.co.uk/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=sp_pop_totl&idim=country:SDN&dl=en&hl=en&q=sudan+population). An estimated 7.5-9.7 million of these people reside in South Sudan according to the UN: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14019208>

<sup>2</sup> 'East Sudan: Forgotten Crisis' 16.Jun.06, <http://www.wfp.org/stories/east-sudan-forgotten-crisis>

<sup>3</sup> 'The Struggle of the Beja People in Eastern Sudan' An Analysis by the Beja Congress, Jan.11

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/countries/sudan>, 27.Jun.2011

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.voicesforsudan.org/2011/04/sudan-mp-says-150000-starving-in-red-sea-state/?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.voicesforsudan.org/2011/04/sudan-mp-says-150000-starving-in-red-sea-state/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter) 4.Apr.2011

<sup>6</sup> Pantuliano, 'Comprehensive Peace' *Review of African Political Economy*, 33.110, pp 716

level.<sup>7</sup> They promoted a federalist policy in which all groups would have regional autonomy, and central government would devolve power. These policies won them support from other minority groups in Sudan. In Sudan's first general election in 1965 the Beja Congress won ten seats in the National Assembly. However, the Assembly proved ineffectual and was repeatedly dissolved from the 1970's to the 1990's due to military coups and government transitions. Underrepresentation was accompanied by Khartoum's policies of 'Arabisation' of the region; attempting to eradicate the traditional language, culture and customs of the Beja by force.<sup>8</sup> The Beja suffered marginalisation, disease, starvation, discrimination, and were unable to get jobs within the civil service; in the words of Beja Congress representatives, these policies were 'killing the Beja slowly'.<sup>9</sup> Following the example of many of their counterparts in Darfur and South Sudan, the Beja Congress turned to militancy to promote their cause.

## 2. The Beja Congress

**2.1** The Beja Congress Militant Wing was formed in late 1989, and joined forces with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 1994. Together the umbrella group coordinated small-scale attacks in conjunction with the SPLA/M on military installations and government-controlled resources throughout the 1990's. Consequently a State of Emergency was imposed by the government. The NDA was later joined by the Rasha'ida Free Lions Movement, a Bedouin tribe also living in East Sudan.<sup>10</sup> Military action by the Beja was also supported by Eritrea. Although the area never erupted into full-scale war, there were protracted periods of low-level conflict, which included the capture from government forces of several towns along the Red Sea Coast and in Kassala Province. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement was considered 'a process to inform change', but it was exclusive to the Government of the North and the forces of the South; it did not address Sudan's various regional issues, or invite disaffected parties such as the Beja Congress to the peace talks.<sup>11</sup> The Beja Congress and the Rasha'ida Free Lions refused to adhere to the rules of a peace agreement about which they were not consulted, and they broke from the NDA to establish the Eastern Front (EF).<sup>12</sup>

**2.2** The Eastern Front's primary goal was to gain more political and administrative autonomy from the central government as well as greater participation in government. Khartoum's intentions toward the EF became apparent in January 2005 when, at a peaceful protest in Port Sudan calling for greater political freedoms, government forces opened fire on the protesters, killing at least twenty people.<sup>13</sup> However, after this incident leaked to the international press, Khartoum opened lines of communication with the EF and began using foreign financing to develop utility services in the three provinces. This gesture was

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<sup>7</sup> 'The Struggle of the Beja People in Eastern Sudan' An Analysis by the Beja Congress, Jan.11

<sup>8</sup> 'The Struggle of the Beja People in Eastern Sudan' An Analysis by the Beja Congress, Jan.11

<sup>9</sup> Waging Peace Meeting with the Beja Congress Wednesday 16th November 2011, Waging Peace Offices

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gurtong.net/Governance/PoliticalParties/BejaCongressParty/tabid/406/Default.aspx>, Mar.2010

<sup>11</sup> Pantuliano, 'Comprehensive Peace? Analysis of the evolving tension in Eastern Sudan', *Review of African Political Economy*, pp 713

<sup>12</sup> Young, 'The Eastern Front and the Struggle Against Marginalisation', *Small Arms Survey 2007*, pp 30

<sup>13</sup> 'Those Responsible for the indiscriminate Port Sudan Killings must be brought to justice', *Amnesty International Press Release*, 31.Jan.2005

considered an olive branch from which peace talks began between the two sides in Asmara, Eritrea in 2006.<sup>14</sup>

**2.3** Two peace documents, the East Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA), and the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (ESRDF), were speedily drafted and signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2006. The Beja signatory to the agreement, Musa Mohammed Ahmed, could not speak English, and was not fully aware of the contents of the agreement. Pivotaly, the agreement was lacking in many areas, failing to properly address vital areas such as wealth sharing and integration of the military. Principally the agreement opened positions in government to representatives from the EF, and specifically a Beja Congress 'Advisor to the President' was created. However, apart from lifting the 'State of Emergency' from Red Sea State, Kassala and Al-Qadarif, the ESPA was extremely vague in terms of its implementation and guarantees.<sup>15</sup> The proposals for a federal system of government, a commitment to Human Rights and the sharing of resources were all mentioned without being fully addressed.<sup>16</sup> There was also much public scepticism about the agreement after the government's attempted 'crackdown' on the Beja Congress officials in March and April of the same year. Several people were arrested, including the Beja Congress' General Secretary and a Chairperson of the Secretariat. Their arrest was interpreted as intimidation by Khartoum, aimed at speeding up the peace process.<sup>17</sup> The peace agreement brought about a split in the party, between those who disagreed with the agreement, and those who were allegedly 'paid off' to agree with it.

### 3. After the ESPA

**3.1** During the ESPA talks Beja Congress members, based in Europe, endeavoured to highlight human rights violations in East Sudan situation to the international community by writing to the UN Secretary General. Their particular concern was the government restriction and expulsion of INGOs who were playing a vital role in the implementation of development projects, providing vital food and medical aid.<sup>18</sup> INGO expulsion has, however, continued to the point where none remain in the region. In 2009 this included the expulsion of Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK as well as the severe restriction of all UNICEF programmes in the area as part of a nationwide expulsion of INGOS following Bashir's indictment by the International Criminal Court.<sup>19</sup>

**3.2** Despite the signing of the ESPA, Eastern Sudan is still suffering from many of the same issues that forced the EF to turn to militancy in 1989. In addition, fractures have appeared within the EF, which include the splitting of the Rasha'ida Lions from the movement, and the formation of a new sub-group called The National Movement for Eastern Sudan (NMES) which does not support the peace agreement.<sup>20</sup> Divisions within the Beja Congress Party have also threatened the stability of the movement; in August

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.gurtong.net/Governance/PoliticalParties/BejaCongressParty/tabid/406/Default.aspx>, Mar.2010

<sup>15</sup> Ati et al., 'City limits: urbanisation and vulnerability in Sudan. Port Sudan case study', Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, pp 5

<sup>16</sup> 'East Sudan Peace Agreement' [www.sudantribune.com](http://www.sudantribune.com), Oct.2006

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Abri-tray-arrests-detention-of-14902>, 6.Apr.2006

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Beja-Congress-calls-for-UN-16483>, 2.Jul.2006

<sup>19</sup> Pantuliano, Jaspers & Ray, 'Where to Now? Agency Expulsions in Sudan', *Humanitarian Policy Group-Alnap Paper*, 2009

<sup>20</sup> <http://frontpagemag.com/2010/08/17/khartoums-war-on-the-beja/>, 8.Jul.2011

2008 the chairman, Mussa Mohammed Ahmed, (also an advisor to President Bashir) and deputy Chairman, Dr. Amna Dirar, fell into disagreement over who should be representing and leading the EF. The main reason was anxiety generated by the government's refusal to implement the peace accord: 'apart from the apportioning of the spoils on paper ... there is little evidence of sustained economic, cultural or social development'.<sup>21</sup> According to the ESPA \$100 million is to be given by the government to the ESRDF every year for five years. However, between 2006 and 2008 only \$25 million has been provided. Dirar and her supporters blamed Ahmed for the lack of funds, as in his advisory position he lacked any real power to implement the terms of the Peace Accord.

**3.3** According to Dirar the most obvious problem in sustaining the ESPA has been the lack of an international guarantor. The third party hosting the talks, Eritrea, was criticised for not taking more responsibility in the post-agreement implementation process. Yet, without broad based support for the peace agreement its actualisation was always going to be difficult.<sup>22</sup> Although East Sudan is continually sidelined by the international media due to events taking place in Darfur and the South, it does not mean its problems are any less serious; Dirar commented, 'You cannot continue without knowing what your future is. The war in Sudan has not finished'.<sup>23</sup> It is estimated there were as many as five thousand militants that required disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) after the signing of the Peace Agreement. However, local reports in early 2008 suggested that only a fraction of the soldiers had gone through the DDR programme.<sup>24</sup> There has been some success in the Security Sector Reform (SSR) programme for the region, with 1200 men being integrated into the Sudanese police and armed forces.<sup>25</sup>

## 4. Repression

**4.1** The signing of the ESPA did not end Khartoum's policy of 'Arabisation' of the Beja. The marginalisation of their community, repossession of land, ban on their language and the imposition of mainstream Sunni religious practices has continued. Beja culture is an oral one and, consequently, they accord almost all authority for claims to land, tribe and family in their language, Ta-Bedawi. The government's attempt to eradicate their language is an attack on the very core of Beja culture, challenging their sense of belonging. It represents Khartoum's efforts to break down their coherence and prevent a united opposition. The government is also now refusing to allow regional funds, like the ESRDF, to take out loans because usury is illegal under Islamic law, thereby deliberately inhibiting the development of the region by the fund.<sup>26</sup>

**4.2** Due to lack of development and the expulsion of NGOs from the region, poverty in East Sudan is extreme. According to the Legatum 2010 Prosperity Index, Sudan overall ranked one hundredth out of one hundred and ten countries.<sup>27</sup> In the East, a UNDP report estimates that more than 50% of the population live under the national poverty line, an average income of 148 SDG (around £40) per month,

<sup>21</sup>Mussa Mohammed Ahmed [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iAdxcM6pGuFDE0-Rce\\_9u1Cc0m7Q](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iAdxcM6pGuFDE0-Rce_9u1Cc0m7Q), 24.Aug.2008

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Beja-Congress-slams-Eritrean,26900> 26.Apr.2008

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Amna Dirar [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iAdxcM6pGuFDE0-Rce\\_9u1Cc0m7Q](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iAdxcM6pGuFDE0-Rce_9u1Cc0m7Q), 24.Aug.2008

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Beja-Congress-slams-Eritrean,26900>, 27.Apr.2008

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Eastern-Sudan-risks-war-if,28223>, 10.Aug.2008

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.prosperity.com/downloads/2010ProsperityIndexRankingsTable.pdf>



with 44% of the population food deprived, eating only 500 Kcal a day.<sup>28</sup> Malnourishment is therefore extremely high, affecting one in every three children in the East while nationally the figure is one in five.<sup>29</sup> There is also very limited access to clean drinking water and sanitation, with 2 million people in the region without access to basic resources. The ESRDF has been completely ineffectual, because Khartoum has restricted its funding. However, one successful example of international assistance to the region has been the World Food Programme's emergency operation of the School Feeding and Food for Work Programmes.<sup>30</sup> School feeding was part of a broader, national effort to encourage school attendance which locally included 36% of all eligible children from the region. In 2009, 270,000 students were being supported. The Work for Food Programme similarly intended to get more adults involved in work, providing them with small plots of land for farming, substantial enough to become self-sufficient. Despite the success of this programme, to the present day the region is still prone to long droughts and bad farming seasons which the government has done nothing to remedy; the US-based Famine Early Warning System estimates that up to 300,000 people presently face 'stressed to crisis levels' of food insecurity in the Red Sea State, despite the deputy chairman of the NCP, Nafie al-Nafie, denying any risk of famine.<sup>31</sup>

**4.3** The 2010 National Elections for President and the National Assembly provided an overwhelming victory for the incumbent, Al-Bashir and his National Congress Party (NCP). For the Beja Congress, whose candidates failed to win any regional seats in the National Assembly, it was a disaster. Since then the NCP has been accused of foul play: ballot box stuffing, fraud, bribery and intimidation of opposition candidates. The Beja Congress party claims to have witnessed NCP officials emptying ballot boxes; there have also been irregularities in the numbers of spoiled papers opposition candidates received compared to the NCP candidates.<sup>32</sup> Many opposition figures boycotted the elections saying that the NCP 'had made it impossible for the process to be held in a free and fair manner' as the national elections commission were not impartial.<sup>33</sup>

**4.4** East Sudan remains isolated; in January 2011 the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a case study by the Overseas Development Institute on urbanisation in Port Sudan: 'Despite trying to secure access to Port Sudan for several weeks, the two international researchers were ultimately denied permission to visit by the Sudanese authorities, and as a result we were unable to carryout in-depth fieldwork in locations profiled in the city'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.sd.undp.org/doc/MDG%20Summery%20East%20Sudan.pdf>, 2010

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.sd.undp.org/projects/pv1.htm>, 2009

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/countries/sudan>, 29.Jun.2011

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Sudan\\_OL\\_2011\\_10\\_final.pdf](http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Sudan_OL_2011_10_final.pdf)

[http://www.sudantribune.com/Khartoum-says-no-rebel-threatsin%2c40336?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.sudantribune.com/Khartoum-says-no-rebel-threatsin%2c40336?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/20/us-sudan-elections-idUSTRE63J1GA20100420>, 20.Apr.2010

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-s-Turabi-threatens-tougher,34800>, 17.Apr.2010

<sup>34</sup> Ati et al., 'City limits: urbanisation and vulnerability in Sudan. Port Sudan case study', Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, Jan.2011

## 5. The East today

**5.1** Since South Sudan's July 2011 independence, conflict has engulfed the entire length of the new North-South border, with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) attacking Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and most recently Blue Nile state. There is widespread fear that the next arena of conflict will be the East. Approximately 3000 Eastern rebels lie in the periphery of the region and some Beja troops are fighting with Malik Agar in Blue Nile. SAF have a string of military posts running from Khartoum to Port Sudan, with troops already mobilising in the East. A SAF military base to the South of the region in Torka is a tinderbox for possible conflict. It was a stop-over point for Iranian and Somali fighters during the Arab Spring who were allowed through with the support of the Sudanese government.

**5.2** Significantly, the Beja Congress, having withdrawn from the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, has now joined the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a newly formed alliance comprising Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM).<sup>35</sup>

Sudan Democracy First Group states in their weekly briefing:

"The national secretariat of the Beja Congress this week decided to withdraw from the East Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) detailing the reasons which led to their considering the agreement as null and void. This adoption of this position came against a background of increased security and political tension in the area including demonstrations and a campaign of arrests and torture. Information from a variety of sources confirms increased military deployment in Eastern Sudan by the security agencies which activity is being encountered by people of the Eastern Sudan. Such political and security developments have emerged came as a result of the NCP's lack of interest in a genuine implementation of the ESPA including the security arrangements protocol; continuation of the state of emergency; corruption; the failure to provide assistance and development funds (contributing to the spread of famine in the area); in addition to the ongoing lack of regional autonomy and transitional regional authority. The situation is a tinder box."<sup>36</sup>

**5.3** Tensions are rising in the East with the following recent reports.

**21<sup>st</sup> September 2011** – Two members of the Beni Amer tribe in East Sudan were killed after an exchange with the municipal police. This led to four hundred strong protests in Gedaref town, demanding the resignation of the State Commissioner and the Head of Police.<sup>37</sup>

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011** – In the face of discontent, the government in Khartoum denies the existence of both the famine threat, and the presence of rebel groups, saying 'rumours about fighters massed by the Beja Congress exist only "in the minds and wishes of some opposition forces".'<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Radio Dabanga, 16 November 2011, <http://www.radiodabanga.org/node/21016>

<sup>36</sup> Sudan Democracy First Group, Weekly Briefing No 2, October 24th

<sup>37</sup> <http://af.reuters.com/article/ethiopiaNews/idAFL5E7KL84G20110922>

<sup>38</sup> Sudan Tribune, 5 October 2011, Khartoum says no rebel threats in Eastern Sudan,

[http://www.sudantribune.com/Khartoum-says-no-rebel-threats-in,40336?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.sudantribune.com/Khartoum-says-no-rebel-threats-in,40336?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter)

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**4<sup>th</sup> October 2011** – The Beja Congress draw attention to soaring food prices, poverty and rising protests, all likely to create conditions for instability and violence.<sup>39</sup>

**20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011** – After three consecutive days of protesting at Kassala University over better study conditions, students were attacked by Government forces using live ammunition and tear gas. During the assault, a government-owned Land Cruiser ran over eight students, and hospitalised four. One of them, named Idrees Mohamed Ali, sustained life-threatening injuries, including a fractured spine.<sup>40</sup>

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2011** - On October 20th the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) arrested a number of youth leaders from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). They had been participating in the annual Sufi celebrations of the Khatmea Sect and DUP which included the participation of Mohamed Osman Al Merghangi, the DUP leader. The youth leaders had been chanting slogans demanding regime change NISS also arrested a member of the political bureau of the DUP, El Shareef Hussein Mahmoud, a former head of the students' union at Kassala University.<sup>41</sup>

**30<sup>th</sup> October 2011** – Hundreds of students protested in Kassala, chanting 'people are hungry' and 'people want to overthrow the government'.<sup>42</sup>

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2011** – Police in Kassala kill a 13-year old boy and seriously injure a young girl while in pursuit of a car. Hundreds take to the streets to protest, and police use tear gas to disperse them. The police claimed the 'accident' occurred when they were chasing the drivers of a truck who they suspected of smuggling. The police used teargas to disperse the protestors.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Abdelmoneim Abu Edris Ali, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Party warns of imminent famine in east Sudan, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h6XYt5M5gchMUGY68A58WynDms-w?docId=CNG.206b7e3a2746fca52d7eb492b168be3f.1f1>

<sup>40</sup> <http://storiesfromdarfur.wordpress.com/2011/10/25/urgent-press-release-on-behalf-of-university-students-in-eastern-sudan/>

<sup>41</sup> Sudan Democracy First Group, Weekly Briefing No 2, October 24th

<sup>42</sup> <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/10/30/uk-sudan-protest-idUKTRE79T2NT20111030>

<sup>43</sup> Sudan Tribune, 1 November 2011, *Police use tear gas to disperse protest in eastern Sudan*,

[#http://www.sudantribune.com/Police-use-tear-gas-to-disperse,40605#](http://www.sudantribune.com/Police-use-tear-gas-to-disperse,40605)

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/11/01/idINIndia-60253620111101>

## 6. UKBA Country of Origin Information on Eastern Sudan

### 6.1 April 2009 Report:

#### CONFLICT IN EASTERN SUDAN

**3.18** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2008 gave a brief account by way of background information to the Eastern conflict and reported on how the organisation is doing in promoting rule of law in order to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Eastern Sudan.

“Eastern Sudan, a vast sun-blasted land of some 300,000 square kilometers, is home to an estimated three to four million of Sudan’s poorest people. The region is made up of three states: Red Sea, Gadaref and Kassala. In each of these states the living conditions are so harsh that the local population has been

facing acute poverty, persistent drought and famine, a lack of adequate access to healthcare and education, high levels of unemployment in addition to land degradation and shrinking pasture areas, for a very long time. This state of affairs led to a low-intensity rebel insurgency over the past eleven years that was settled with the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) in October 2006, between the Government of Sudan and the Eastern Front. “This breakthrough highlighted opportunities for peace-building, such as promoting development, social equity, and peace and reconciliation. As peace is sustained, the strenuous economic and social realities in this region have made it very difficult for the poor and marginalized segments of society to obtain affordable legal counseling [sic] and representation. ... In addition, in Eastern Sudan, traditional administrative structures have played a crucial role in promoting the culture of rule of law and conflict transformation. However, these structures need to be adjusted to the realities of the 2006 ESPA. Their roles in fostering and nurturing the culture of rule of law and peaceful conflict resolution also need to be revitalized. “Moreover, the root causes of conflict in this part of the country are related to natural resources. Since Eastern Sudan’s population is predominantly rural, competition over scarce natural resources, such as water, land and grazing, is one of the causes of inter and intra tribal tension and sometimes conflicts. The presence of a significant number of arms and

the unresolved issue of access to land, and equity in resource distribution, is another factor that makes this region prone to conflict. In order to sustain peace by preventing conflict, UNDP established a presence in Kassala in October 2005 and launched the “Promoting Rule of Law and Peaceful Conflict Resolution in Eastern Sudan” project with the support of the Netherlands government, The European Commission and Norwegian embassy.”

The Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA): 14 October 2006:

**3.19** “... in August 2006, the Government of Eritrea convened negotiations between the Eastern rebels, known as the Eastern Front (EF), and the Government of Sudan. A peace deal (the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, or ESPA) was signed in the capital of Eritrea, Asmara, on 14 October, guaranteeing greater development for Eastern Sudan” (FCO Country Profile, 6 November 2007 – Eastern Sudan)



**3.20** UN News reported on 27 April 2007 of The UNHCR's pledge to "shine the spotlight on the 'forgotten situation in eastern Sudan', where the agency has been running camps since 1968 for displaced Eritreans and Ethiopians, but has attracted little international attention." Mr. Guterres visited the Wad Sherif and Kilo 26 camps and held talks in Kassala with local authorities and officials from UNHCR's Sudanese Government counterpart, the Commissioner for Refugees. "We have a huge refugee population here to whom nobody is paying attention," Mr. Guterres said. "These are forgotten people ... Today, the whole world focuses on Darfur and South Sudan and nobody thinks of the refugees in the east. People also forgot that Sudan has been one of the most generous countries [for] hosting refugees for 40 years. Personally I believe this generosity is rooted in Islam."

**3.21** The UN Secretary General's (UN SG) Report of 17 April 2007 stated that:

"Implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, signed in October 2006, has stagnated, owing largely to internal power struggles within the leadership of the Eastern Front. A split among Beja factions of the Front prevented it from presenting a list of nominees for the posts allocated to it under the Agreement. The Eastern Front leadership has now requested mediation by the Government of Eritrea to

help resolve the abiding conflict among the Beja factions. For its part, the Sudanese Government continued to express optimism about the implementation of the Agreement and has begun preparations for the disarmament and integration of former Eastern Front combatants."

## ARMED OPPOSITION FACTIONS: EAST SUDAN

**14.21** The Sudan Tribune reported on 24 June 2007 that: "Former east Sudan rebel fighters have entered the main towns for the first time under a fledgling peace deal, but opposition divisions have halted political progress. Adding that: The east Sudan strife, overshadowed by bloodier conflicts in Sudan's western Darfur region and the south, dragged on for a decade before a peace deal last year."

## PEACE AND CONFLICT IN SUDAN

### East Sudan

**25.12** The *Sudan Tribune* reported on 26 April 2008 that:

"A former rebel group in eastern Sudan which signed a peace agreement with Khartoum last year said disappoint [sic] by the attitude of the Eritrean government towards the non-implementation of the signed deal. On October 14, 2006, Sudanese government and East Front rebels, composed of the Beja Congress and Free Lions, signed a peace accord that was negotiated with Eritrean help and is aimed at ending a 12-year armed conflict."

**25.13** International Crisis Group reported on 16 June 2008 that Sudan was getting closer to collapse as last month saw heavy fighting between government forces and the South over the oil-rich Abyei region, and also an abortive attack by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), on Khartoum on 10 May 2008

Which the report stated is likely to prompt brutal government retribution. “Against this backdrop, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court reported to the UN Security Council, pointing out, yet again, that Sudan has flouted its international obligation to co-operate with the court, and criticizing the international community for its shameful silence in the face of Sudan's wilful defiance.”

**25.14** The Canadian Red Cross reported on 24 October 2008 that with the assistance of the Canadian Government and the Canadian public, the organisation together with the Netherlands Red Cross, is supporting the Sudanese Red Crescent in an integrated health, water and sanitation program in Kassala State in East Sudan. “With a focus on community capacity building, the Sudanese Red Crescent is working to dig new wells, rehabilitate old ones, and construct latrines. Solar power is used to fuel pumps, and communities are learning to run and maintain these wells. Communities themselves will take the leadership in the promotion of hygiene, sanitation and safe water practices.”

## Conflict and insecurity

**25.15** In January 2006 ICG reported that:

“The NCP [National Congress Party] is also resorting to potentially more violent tactics. There are persistent reports of efforts to encourage tribal leaders to recruit militiamen in exchange for money and weapons, in order to create a rural force that can monitor the Eastern Front's activities and serve as

a first line of resistance. Most of these attempts to form *Janjaweed*-like groups have not yet succeeded, probably because despite their communal divisions, the eastern tribes have an acute sense of their social and economic interdependence as part of the Beja nation. Such tribal militias as exist are weak, with members showing up once a month only to collect pay. The policy, and the rumours it engenders, have nevertheless contributed to the spread of weapons and fear among civilian populations.”

**25.16** “The government has also been supporting the army of Sheikh Suliman Ali Betay, which is larger (some estimate 1,000 to 2,000 armed men on camels) and more formidable than the militias. The Hameshkoreb area belongs to his tribe, the Demelab, and he would like his force to replace the SPLM and the Eastern Front in the area. But Sheikh Suliman also refuses to fight other Beja and recognises that an effort to impose a military solution would only hurt the civilian population.”

**25.17** The same report also noted that:

“Whatever political game the NCP is playing in the East, militarisation of the region persists. Security is tight in the major cities. Military intelligence reportedly remains influential in government decision-making and closely monitors movements throughout the territory, keeping a wary eye in particular on anything related to Eritrea.”

**25.18** “The greatest danger is the potential for an armed confrontation between the government and Eastern Front over control of Hameshkoreb and the opposition areas after the SPLM withdraws its troops. If not discussed and settled in formal negotiations soon, this could be the flashpoint that produces all-out war. However, the government still underestimates the level of discontent and overestimates its political control. ‘We have complete control over the religious and tribal leaders in eastern Sudan. We are not concerned about this so-called Eastern Front’, an NCP official claimed confidently. This is a dangerous

misreading not unlike that which contributed to the government's failure to contain the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) in Darfur."

**25.19** "Under the southern deal, the SPLM were supposed to have redeployed from the east to the south within a year, but they said this week they were unable to meet that deadline because of logistical reasons. [U.N. envoy Jan] Pronk said slow withdrawal was a major problem to the peace deal. On Friday he said: "This is creating a void with a potential for new armed conflict.'" (*Sudan Tribune*, 14 January 2006)

**25.20** The article continued:

"The Sudanese army is supposed to occupy SPLM positions once they have withdrawn. But eastern rebels, also in the same areas, say the government will have to fight them first." (*Sudan Tribune*, 14 January 2006)

In the 'Latest News; Events in Sudan, between 16 March and 1 May 2009' (pp4):

**March 31 2009:** The expulsions of several NGOs earlier this month have left gaps in the provision of humanitarian aid in Darfur and Eastern Sudan - volatile regions key to the success of the 2005 peace accord.

(IRIN News, Expulsions leave gaps in Three Areas, eastern region, 31 March 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83708>, Date accessed 1 April 2009)<sup>44</sup>

## 6.2 UKBA Country of Origin Information on Eastern Sudan

### April 2010 Report:

Eastern Sudan (mid 1990s to 2006)

**3.24** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) webpage entitled, *Access to Justice and Confidence Building in Kassala State*, undated, accessed 15 January 2010, stated that:

"Eastern Sudan ... is home to an estimated three to four million of Sudan's poorest people. The region is made up of three states: Red Sea, Gadaref and Kassala. In each of these states the living conditions are so

harsh that the local population has been facing acute poverty, persistent drought and famine, a lack of adequate access to healthcare and education, high levels of unemployment in addition to land degradation and shrinking pasture areas, for a very long time. This state of affairs led to a low-intensity rebel insurgency over the past eleven years that was settled with the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) in October 2006, between the Government of Sudan and the Eastern Front".

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<sup>44</sup> United Kingdom: Home Office, Country of Origin Information Report - Sudan, 1 May 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a02871c2.html> [accessed 23 November 2011]



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**3.25** The EIU Sudan Country Profile 2009, Sudan, similarly observed that:

“A simmering rebellion in eastern Sudan, which was driven by grievances similar to those in Darfur, namely economic and political marginalisation, was largely resolved by the end of 2006. The rebel Eastern Front, an alliance of the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, was weakened by the withdrawal of the SPLM (a former ally) from the conflict in the east, in accordance with the CPA. With the mediation of the Eritrean government ‘which had previously backed the rebels’ a peace agreement was signed in October 2006, providing for representation of the eastern rebel groups in government and the establishment of a US\$100m development fund.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> United Kingdom: Home Office, Country of Origin Information Report - Sudan, 16 April 2010, available at: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101208171359/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country\\_reports.html#countries](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101208171359/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html#countries) [accessed 23 November 2011]