

**Migration Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

MRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Country: Sudan
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Questions

1. Please advise about the stability of Kassala State, Sudan and whether there is conflict between or targetting of minority groups.

RESPONSE

1. Please advise about the stability of Kassala State, Sudan and whether there is any conflict between or targetting of minority groups.

Detailed information on individual towns in the large eastern states of Sudan is not extensive. Kassala State is one of the three states comprising Eastern Sudan. It is approximately 350 kilometres east of the capital Khartoum (Attachment 1). The states occupy a combined area of approximately 300,000 square kilometres and have a population of approximately 3.83 million, of which about 1.5 million reside in Kassala.

The population of rural Kassala and Gedarif States is more ethnically and culturally diverse; the Beja⁴, Rashaida⁵, Arabs (Shukriyya⁶, Halawin and many others) and Nubians⁷ are the predominate groups in the states. Large groups of Western Sudanese, mainly Darfurians⁸, and West African tribes are concentrated around the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme in Kassala and provide the main agricultural labour force for the mechanized schemes in Gedarif State. Traders and government employees are concentrated mainly in the large urban centers of Port Sudan, Gedarif and Kassala and have historically constituted the economic and political elite (United Nations State Team, Kassala, Red Sea and UN Resident Coordinator Office Sudan 2007, *East Sudan Analysis and Priorities*, 25 May, p. 2, <http://www.unsudanig.org> – Accessed 3rd June 2009 – Attachment 2).

Living conditions are difficult in these areas:

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 (United Nations Development Programme undated, ‘Access to justice and confidence building in Kassala State’, <http://www.sd.undp.org/projects/dg6.htm> - Accessed 3 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

The largest ethnic group is the Beja but the state of Kessala is also home to the Rashaida, ‘an Arab pastoralist tribe that migrated from the Arabian Gulf to Sudan in the mid-19th century... People from central Sudan also live in the east in small numbers and hold positions in trade and government. Because of war in their areas, there are also displaced people from the Nuba Mountains and southern Sudan, as well as more recent migrants fleeing conflict in the west. The population of eastern Sudan is overwhelmingly Muslim., but the religion is of a highly local character intimately interwoven with a host of tribal and other belief systems’ (Young, John, 2007, *The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, pp. 15, 16, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/portal/spotlight/sudan/sudan_publications.html - Accessed 4 June 2009 – Attachment 4).

There are somewhere between 65-80,000 internally displaced persons in the state of Kassala (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009, ‘Sudan: 4.9 million IDPs across Sudan face ongoing turmoil. A profile of the internal displacement situation’, 27 May, p. 36 - Attachment 5).

A UN Joint Assessment Mission background paper provides a summary of current and past conflicts in Sudan. The matrix includes Kassala State and refers to [information deleted] as having tribal conflict:

[Information deleted]	Tribal Conflict	Since 1968 and on-going	Shukriya sub-groups	This is a resource-based conflict and it revolves around claims over migratory routes. The traditional administration meet seasonally to resolve such conflicts and payment of diya is paid during these meetings. The meetings also define the routes for animal movements. However, disputes resulting in bloodshed continue to occur in spite of these settlements.
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(Joint Assessment Mission Background Paper (untitled) [‘Past Conflicts in Kassala State’] 2007, JAM website, <http://jam.unsudan.info/background-info/index.jsp> - Accessed 4 June 2009 – Attachment 6).

In October 2008, a clash occurred between members of the Hausa tribe and government forces in Kassala State following the publication of statements by Sudanese President Al-Bashir to the effect that the tribe was not Sudanese;

The pro-government Akhir-Lahza newspaper said that scores were killed in **Kassala** state and many injured during the clashes. There were also material damages to properties and installation, the newspaper said. The official news agency (SUNA) published statements attributed to Al-Bashir denying that he made any such remarks. He also affirmed that "the Hausa were one of the most coexisting and integrated tribes in society". Al-Bashir accused some parties of attempting to deliberately "fan the fire of sedition" and push the Hausa tribe to retaliate against the central government.

Some officials have accused the opposition People Congress Party (PCP) led by Hassan Al-Turabi of standing behind the report (‘Sudan tribesmen in violent clashes over alleged Bashir statements’ 2008, *Sudan Tribune*, 19 October – Attachment 12).

No further references to such conflicts have been found in a search of the sources consulted in the time available.

The Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement terminated the conflict between the Eastern Front (EF) 'comprising the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions Movement' and the National Government.

The ESPA recognises that political, social and economic marginalisation were the primary drivers of conflict in the East. Accordingly, Article 22 of the Agreement delineates the strategic objectives of development which are necessary to redress these problems. Therefore, the ESPA provides both an important opportunity as well as challenge for the UN and Partners to effectively support the peace process.

- The ESPA was passed by the National Assembly on 6 November 2006 and was registered with the UN Secretary General who pledged support for its implementation. The ESPA's incorporation into the Interim National Constitution (INC) is, however, on hold pending discussions between the National Congress Party (NCP) and its political allies regarding the allocation of seats in Congress to the Eastern Front.

...
A key element of the ESPA is the establishment of the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (ESRDF). The ESRDF will serve as the principal organ in the planning, monitoring and follow up of reconstruction and development programming (United Nations State Team, Kassala, Red Sea and UN Resident Coordinator Office Sudan 2007, *East Sudan Analysis and Priorities*, 25 May, p. 3, <http://www.unsudanig.org> – Accessed 3rd June 2009 – Attachment 2).

Conflict in these states is primarily linked to access to resources:

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 the Rule of Law and Peaceful Conflict Resolution in Eastern Sudan' project with the support of the Netherlands government, The European Commission and Norwegian embassy (United Nations Development Programme (undated), 'Access to justice and confidence building in Kassala State', <http://www.sd.undp.org/projects/dg6.htm> - Accessed 3 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

Demobilisation of former rebel group members still continues under the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process, and after the first phase saw completed the reintegration of 1,700 Eastern Front members in the first phase, phase 2 began in April 2009;

"After demobilizing and reintegrating 1,700 ex-combatants from the Eastern Front, the Government, as part of the second phase of DDR, is now demobilizing 2,254 combatants from SAF and PDF", said North Sudan DDR Commissioner, Sulafeldeen Salih, during a ceremony held on the occasion.

The official ceremony was attended by senior governmental officials, representatives of North Sudan DDR Commission, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), Popular Defense Forces (PDF), Eastern Front, donor countries, and UN officials.

Eastern Sudan DDR is carried out under UNDP's Support to Human Security Project. During its first phase (2007-2008), the project also succeeded in registering demobilized combatants, and providing them with several services including medical screening, food and clothing packages, and financial support.

In a joint reintegration effort, NSDDRC, UNDP, Food Agriculture Organization, and national NGOs, 1,251 ex-combatants were trained on veterinary and basic business management skills. They were also provided with goats, sheep and commodities to help them start up small businesses ('Sudan demobilizes 2254 former eastern Sudan rebels' 2009, *Sudan Tribune*, 5 April, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30761> – Accessed 4 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

The UN Secretary-General report of April 2009 discusses the overall security situation in Sudan, noting that

it had issued an arrest warrant for President al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The announcement of the warrant prompted a series of largely non-violent protests in Khartoum, El Obeid, Kadugli, Port Sudan, Dilling, Wad Madani and Kassala. Peaceful demonstrations were staged in front of the UNMIS and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) compounds in Khartoum, and petitions were submitted to senior United Nations staff by several organizations (UN Security Council 2009, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan*, 17 April, p. 2 - Attachment 8).

In March 2009, the government of Sudan announced it would expel 16 relief organisations including 13 international and 3 Sudanese relief organisations (further information is provided in Human Rights Watch 2009, 'Sudan: Expelling Aid Agencies Harms Victims', 5 March - Attachment 9; 'Sudan: NGO expulsions leave significant healthcare gaps in Darfur', *IRIN*, 4 May, Attachment 10). These expulsions caused the Overseas Development Group and others to express their concern that areas including the Three Areas and Eastern Sudan would be subjected to increased vulnerability to humanitarian and economic crisis;

"The expulsions have left large parts of the Three Areas and eastern Sudan without humanitarian assistance or recovery and reintegration support," writes Sara Pantuliano, research fellow with the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute. "Unlike in Darfur, there is very little additional capacity beyond the expelled agencies to even attempt to fill these gaps."

...

Kassala and Red Sea states have the highest malnutrition rates in Sudan, according to ODI. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that the expulsions will leave more than 100,000 vulnerable children in northern Sudan without support.

...

"...The expulsion means we can no longer support 56 health clinics that we've helped to build or rehabilitate since the peace agreement in 2005. We can no longer provide these clinics with essential medicines, staff training or support for community health education initiatives," Kurt Tjossem, International Rescue Committee (IRC) regional director for the Horn and East Africa region, told IRIN.

Before its expulsion, the IRC was working in Kassala, Red Sea, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan "... supporting... lifesaving medical care, water, sanitation and livelihoods for around 1.1 million people".

Now, the IRC has been forced to stop its water and sanitation programmes in these areas. Fewer than 40 percent of the population of Kassala and Red Sea states have access to safe drinking water.

...

Abyei, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and the eastern region have only recently emerged from conflict and remain highly volatile, she said. Clashes between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in May 2008 displaced about 60,000 civilians in Southern Kordofan and Abyei.

Relations within the GNU could also be affected. "... The decision to expel the international NGOs may also increase tensions between the ruling National Congress Party and the SPLM, as it appears that the latter was not consulted on the decision," according to ODI. "The SPLM is seeking to contest the move in order to allow the organisations concerned to continue operating at least in former SPLM-controlled areas of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, as well as in Abyei.

"As with the SPLM, the Eastern Front was not consulted about the expulsions. The front, which is currently undergoing a political crisis, is likely to be further alienated from Eastern Sudan society, particularly youth, potentially fuelling fresh unrest" ('Sudan: Expulsions leave gaps in Three Areas, eastern region' 2009, *IRIN*, 31 March - Attachment 11).

Further information on the general humanitarian situation in the Eastern States is provided in the recent IDMC report of May 2009 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009, 'Sudan: 4.9 million IDPs across Sudan face ongoing turmoil. A profile of the internal displacement situation', 27 May, pp. 88-89 - Attachment 5).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources

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UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

International News & Politics

BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

The Economist <http://www.economist.co.uk>

Non Government Sources

UNHCR Refworld <http://www.refworld.org>

International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?>

Strategic Forecasting Inc. <http://www.stratfor.com>

Region Specific Links

All Africa.com <http://allafrica.com>

Africa Confidential <http://www.africa-confidential.com/home>

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Sudan Information Gateway <http://unsudanig.org>

Joint Assessment Mission in the Sudan <http://jam.unsudan.info/background-info/index.jsp>

Sudan Human Rights Quarterly <http://www.shro-cairo.org/quarterly.htm>

Search Engines

Clusty <http://clusty.com/>

Webcrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>

Copernic

Databases

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Khashm al Qirbah', Microsoft Encarta website, <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/mapcenter/map.aspx?TextLatitude=39.45&TextLongitude=-98.907&TextAltitude=0&TextSelectedEntity=39070&MapStyle=Comprehensive&MapSize=Large&MapStyleSelectedIndex=0&searchTextMap=khashm+al+qirbah&MapStylesList=Comprehensive&ZoomOnMapClickCheck=on> – Accessed 5 June 2009.
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12. 'Sudan tribesmen in violent clashes over alleged Bashir statements' 2008, *Sudan Tribune*, 19 October.