



Sudan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 February 2018

Is there any information on the Alberta ethnic group, and particularly the al-Bersha tribe, and, if so, is there any information on their general treatment by the regime for those living in Khartoum and throughout Sudan generally?

The nearest match to an ethnic group in Sudan called the Alberta is the Berti tribe. References to a tribe in Sudan called the al-Bersha were not found among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre.

A 2006 article from the Washington Post refers to the Berti as follows:

“These are unhappy times for the king of the Berti tribe, with tens of thousands of his people killed, harassed or chased from their homes by fighting in Darfur. But as a surge of violence threatens those still clinging to their land, he’s careful not to point fingers at any warring faction.

Tribal leaders whose people live amid one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises face a delicate balancing act: Even the perception of support for either government-allied Janjaweed militia or the rebel factions they battle may bring reprisal violence against their followers.

Despite the massive violence perpetrated against the Berti, King Sadeeg al Mellih Ahmadai insists his people were not being specifically targeted by either the government or rebels, but are just peaceful farmers and herdsman caught in the maelstrom.

‘The Berti are a peaceful people. When there is war, they prefer to take their belongings and leave,’ he said in an interview in a police compound in the northern town of Mellit. This is why you will find so many Berti in the refugee camps.’

More may be heading to camps soon, with a two-month-old government offensive causing violence to spike in northern Darfur, where about 250,000 Berti people are spread in villages across most of the arid region of Sudan’s remote west.

Ever since ethnic African rebels rose against the central government in 2003, the Sudanese government has been accused by many outsiders and many here of unleashing a fierce military repression _ and of letting the Janjaweed militia of Arab nomads commit atrocities against African villagers, like the Berti. The United States says the targeted violence constitutes genocide.”
(Washington Post (17 October 2006) *Situation Dire for Civilians in Darfur*)

A document published by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), in a section titled “Berti” (section 2.2.1), states:

“An independent researcher with expert knowledge on the conflict in Sudan who has asked not to be quoted by name wrote in an email response of December 2016 regarding the relationship of the Berti with the Sudanese government:

‘Many Darfurians from all tribes have been living in Khartoum for a long time. Some would even say they constitute the first group, by origin. They were suspected of being pro-rebels since the beginning of the war in 2003, and even more since the JEM [Justice and Equality Movement] rebel raid on Khartoum in 2008. Yet, in terms of ethnicity, only the Zaghawa were specifically persecuted. Much less the Berti, who have people working in various government forces (including security services) and institutions (in particular Osman Kibir, a main Darfurian figure in the ruling party, was North Darfur governor for more than a decade).’

Jérôme Tubiana, an independent researcher with expertise on conflict and armed movements in Darfur in his email response of 18 July 2017 remarked the following on the Berti and their recruitment into government-affiliated militia as well as the rebel Justice and Equality Movement:

‘Some of the Berti from Um Kaddada/Taweisha (not Mellit) were recruited into non-Arab PDF [Public Defence Forces] militias since 2011, specifically targeting the Zaghawa. This was mostly made under the auspices of then North Darfur Governor Osman Kibir, himself a Berti. Yet those militias were not that strong and were sometimes defeated by rebels. Since Kibir is not governor anymore, those militias are less important, and more generally the Berti are less important within the local administration in Darfur. Some of the Berti elite are with the government like Kibir but other are important members of JEM [Justice and Equality Movement].’” (Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) (September 2017) *Darfur - COI Compilation*, p.46-47)

A report from the Amsterdam based pro-Darfuri Radio Dabanga states:

“Seven people were killed and others wounded in an attack by paramilitaries of the Border Guards and the Central Reserve Police (locally known as Abu Tira) on six villages in Mellit locality, North Darfur, on Sunday. Multiple sources reported to Radio Dabanga from the locality that a large group of militiamen, belonging to the Ziyadiya tribe, riding in 17 Land Cruisers, and attacked villages populated by people from the Berti tribe. ‘They raided Hillet Abdelrahim, Hillet Hashab, Bambatafei, Sangarei, Abu Jira, and Soug El Khamis, randomly firing around them. Seven villagers were killed, and several others were injured,’ one of the sources said. ‘The Ziyadiya robbed the villagers of hundreds of livestock, and took them into the direction of El Koma,’ he added. Last February and March, Ziyadiya militias launched several attacks on Berti villages in Mellit locality. 106 villagers were killed. According to reports from Mellit early April, nearly 50,000 people were affected by the violence, more than 7,400 families were displaced, and at least 190 houses went up in flames.” (Radio Dabanga (6 July 2015) *Seven dead in Ziyadiya attack on Berti villages in North Darfur*)

A December 2015 UN Security Council report, in a section titled “Local conflicts and intercommunal violence” (paragraph 9: “Cattle-rustling”), states:

“During the reporting period, four incidents of cattle-rustling were registered. In North Darfur, on 21 October, an exchange of fire broke out between Berti and Beni Omran supported by Zayadiya, following the theft by the latter of cattle belonging to the former, and four Berti and two Beni Omran were injured. In South Darfur, on 19 November, Beni Halba attacked Salamat in Kubum and Markundi villages, in response to cattle-rustling by the latter. Four Salamat and two Beni Halba were killed, and following the deployment of the government security forces to the area on 21 November, the two groups agreed to resolve the tension.” (UN Security Council (24 December 2015) *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, p.3)

A June 2016 UN Security Council report, in a section headed “Intercommunal conflict” (paragraph 9), states:

“In 2015, intercommunal fighting resulted in approximately one third of all conflict-related fatalities and accounted for over 40 per cent of the people displaced in Darfur. Key land ownership disputes such as the one between the Berti and the Zayadiya in Malha, Al Kuma and Mellit in North Darfur remained unresolved. After the resumption of fighting between the Berti and the Zayadiya in July 2015, the North Darfur State government facilitated the signing of separate cessation of hostilities agreements between the Berti and the Zayadiya, while additional Sudanese armed forces troops were deployed to the affected areas to stabilize the situation.” (UN Security Council (8 June 2016) *Special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, p.4)

See also March 2017 UN Security Council which, in a section titled “Local conflicts and intercommunal violence” (paragraph 9), states:

“In East Darfur, the Southern Rezeigat and Ma’alia tribes clashed near Abu Karinka on 1 and 18 February 2017 over disputes relating to cattle theft. On 19 February, a firefight following the destruction of a Berti farm by the Agarba subclan of the Ma’alia in Al Naeir, east of Abu Karinka, resulted in the death of seven Berti. Government forces were deployed to the area, but on 20 February, members of the Berti community attacked and burned two Ma’alia villages outside Abu Karinka. In total, 17 Berti and 3 Ma’alia were reported to have been killed in the series of incidents.” (UN Security Council (23 March 2017) *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, p.3)

A report from Radio Dabanga states:

“The house of King Yasser Hussein Ahmadi, the leader of the Berti tribe in North Darfur, was stormed by members of the Rapid Support Forces on Friday morning. His house has been searched several times. The house search in Mellit locality resulted in the damage to some furniture and was conducted ‘in a humiliating manner’, the head of the Berti youth group, Mohamed El Haj Yousif, told Radio Dabanga. He reported that a number of

RSF members, driving 14 Land Cruisers, raided the King Ahmadi's house. 'They beat one of the guards, broke the outside door and searched the house.' Inside, they broke chairs and parts of the tribal brass artefacts. 'This is the fifth time his house has been searched in this shameful and unfortunate manner,' El Haj said. He was unable to report the reasons for the house searches." (Radio Dabanga (28 November 2017) *North Darfur tribe leader's house damaged*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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