

**FLASH UPDATE** (26 Jul 2020)**SUDAN: Escalation of Violence in Darfur - Flash Update No. 2****HIGHLIGHTS**

- More than 60 people were reportedly killed and approximately 60 injured during an armed attack in Masteri Village, north of Beida locality, in West Darfur, on 25 July.
- This was one of the latest of a series of security incidents reported over the last week that left several villages and houses burned, markets and shops looted, and infrastructure damaged.
- The escalation of violence in different parts of Darfur region is leading to increased displacement, compromising the agricultural season, causing loss of lives and livelihoods and driving growing humanitarian needs.
- The Government West Darfur declared a complete lockdown for El Geneina Town and Beida locality, effective 20 July until further notice. Earlier this month, the Government of North Darfur declared, on 13 July, a State of Emergency, following the recent escalation of violence in Kutum.

**SITUATION OVERVIEW:**

Tensions remain high in West Darfur, following the rapid increase in recent weeks in the number and frequency of security incidents, especially around the capital El Geneina and Masteri Village, in Beida locality. At least seven violent events have been reported from 19 to 26 July, leaving dozens of people dead or injured, several villages and houses burned down, an unconfirmed number of people displaced, according to preliminary data collected by humanitarians in the field. Following the fights, the Wali (Governor) of West Darfur declared a complete lockdown for El Geneina Town and Beida locality, effective 20 July until further notice.

On the latest incident, on 25 July afternoon, around 500 armed men attacked Masteri Town, some 48 km from El Geneina Town, leaving more than 60 people dead, mostly among the Masalit community, and another 60 injured. An unconfirmed number of houses in several parts in the south, north, and east of the village were looted and burned, as well as half of the local market. Some of the injured were transferred via helicopter to receive treatment in El Geneina. Following the attack, a group of about 500 people started a sit-in in front of the Masalit Sultan House, a settlement hosting about 4,200 internally displaced persons (IDP), in Masteri. The group is reportedly protesting the recent violence affecting their community and has urged authorities to take urgent measures to protect them against the attacks. The Masalit allegedly informed they will not carry out burials for the 60 community members that died until actions are taken by the authorities.

Earlier in the week, several other incidents were reported in El Geneina locality, supposedly affecting people in nearly 30 villages, according to preliminary information from humanitarian organizations. Several houses have reportedly been looted and burned down in at least six Masalit villages of Andeita, Hashaba, Ardeiba, Sartia, Kokoldol, Awsarei on 23 July, and other attacks were reported in El Geneina Town from 21 to 23 July. According to humanitarians, several people have left their houses and moved towards El Geneina Town, sheltering in public buildings, including schools. According to some reports from the field, residents of several villages in both El Geneina and Beida are fleeing their localities, fearing future attacks and more violence. Returnees from Melibeda and Faganta villages, in Beida, reportedly fled into neighbouring Chad for the



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second time this year, and residents of Megmeri and Afandi villages have apparently left their homes and taken refuge in Sisi Village, in Kereinik locality, according to preliminary data from aid workers. Violence is also increasing in other states in the Darfur region, including recent attacks to IDP population in Fata Bono, North Darfur; in Kass, Gerieda and Abdoss villages, in South Darfur; among other incidents. The attacks and clashes, in the middle of the agricultural season, are causing loss of lives and livelihoods and driving growing humanitarian needs. Across all Darfur states, nearly 2.8 million people are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC 3 and 4) from June to September, more than 545,000 of them in West Darfur alone.

RESPONSE:

The increasing violence is hampering humanitarian operations in West Darfur. With the lockdown announced as a 24-hour daily curfew, all movements of people are restricted, including humanitarian staff. Access to nutrition, water and sanitation, education, health and other critical services have been compromised. Humanitarian organizations are, however, working with the Government's Humanitarian Aid Commission to allow movements of aid workers, and assessments are expected to start on 27 July. Preparedness and response plans are already in place. Gaps in response, if any, will become clearer after assessments have been carried out.

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