

## HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT



It's official. There is a famine in Sudan. Today one hundred Sudanese civilians – men, women and children – will die from starvation. Tomorrow, one hundred more. And the famine is entirely man-made. This appalling loss of life will continue until the combatants in Sudan put the people of Sudan before power.

Famine is defined technically as when “at least 20% of people are experiencing extreme lack of food, starvation and destitution, resulting in critical levels of acute malnutrition and death.” That level has been reached in western Sudan, in Zamzam a township of 500,000 people to which aid agencies are being denied access. The warring parties are concerned that aid will help the other side. Thus the ongoing conflict has created a chokehold on humanitarian operations, preventing affected communities from receiving life-saving food aid.

A news report published 9<sup>th</sup> August on Radio Dabanga website - ‘More children dying of hunger’ - has a photo too shocking, too explicit to include here. **At the UN it has been said that the level of suffering in Sudan is unimaginable, and the famine is expected to persist, intensify and spread.**

The Nuba Mountains region on the southern edge of Sudan is the homeland from which most Sudanese Christians come. Juma Idris is a Relief & Rehabilitation Coordinator working there. He says 123,000 families have fled there for safety, including 260,000 children under the age of five. “We have more than 15 displacement camps in the region, with many people suffering from malnutrition due to hunger and lack of food. During August, 187 people died because of this, mainly children and the elderly.” This is in Kauda, Heiban and Dalami counties, south of Kadugli town, which itself is under siege.

## ELSEWHERE IN SUDAN

Ombadda, on the western edge of Omdurman, was home to a million people. It is still being fought over. A community group says large parts are now uninhabitable due to the presence of decomposing corpses in streets and homes, and a complete lack of services. "Waste is widespread, and plundered homes have become breeding grounds for dirt, filth, and a gathering place for rodents. Stagnant water from broken pipes is a breeding ground for water-borne illnesses such as kalazar."

Rani Edwards ran Abu Rof clinic in Omdurman, a much-loved Christian medical mission which was a lifeline for the city's poorest residents. He tells of one church that managed to organize a meeting, cleaned their building, and collected the people from their homes with a bus to avoid the danger of the streets. The first meeting was a success, but on the second attempt, the bus was halted by the Sudanese Army. "They sent the people home, saying it was too dangerous to hold a congregation." The incident is an example of how efforts to rebuild life are swiftly undone and brief moments of normality are quickly crushed.

In addition to food shortages, several parts of Sudan are suffering from floods due to seasonal rains. There have been life threatening flash floods, and hundreds of houses have been destroyed. Near Port Sudan a dam burst washing away farms and villages. The dam was the main source of drinking water for the city. Elsewhere the heavy rain damaged a fibre-optic cable, causing communications outage.



*Food for relief being prepared in Kadugli*

Port Sudan shelters 240,000 displaced people residing in 34 shelter centres, such as schools. Halima fled her home in Khartoum North at the beginning of the war, when her husband died. First she fled north with her seven children, to Shendi. After months of suffering, she decided to travel to Port Sudan in search of a better living situation, given the presence there of the central government offices. The last food ration she had from them was two months ago. "It contained one kilo of flour and lentils, cooking oil, and some household utensils, and it ran out in just three days." She cannot buy food from the market due to the crushingly high prices, having no source of income. Their lives now depend entirely on aid given by the local community and residents neighbouring the camps, which is scarce compared to their actual need for food.



Thank you to all those who keep praying for Sudan, its people, and its church. And many thanks to all who continue to give to support relief work done by the Church in Sudan.

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